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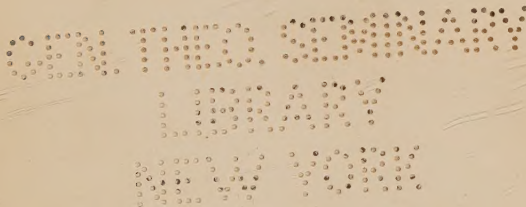
# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

A COMMENTARY  
FOR ENGLISH READERS

BY

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## INTRODUCTION

FEW problems in connexion with the New Testament have been more keenly debated in the last half century than that of the date and authorship of the Acts. And the reason is evident. The book bridges the gulf which separates the Church of the Upper Chamber from the Churches of Europe. 'Without it there would be such a break in the continuity of the New Testament that we should with difficulty recognize in the spiritual Christ of the Epistles the Jesus of Nazareth of the Gospels. We open the Acts, and all is clear. We perceive at once that it traces all through this interval the continuous action of the Risen Lord.'<sup>1</sup> But it is obvious that the strength of this bridge depends very largely on the question whether it was built by a contemporary or by a later hand.

What, then, are the reasons which have led so many critics, from Baur and Zeller onwards, to assign the book to a second-century writer? They would appear to be, in the main, four in number.

I. Most of these critics distrust, in varying degrees, the miraculous element. They start with a prejudice against miracles, which are, they hold, the legendary accretions which grew round the historical facts, and which require something like a century to explain their growth. And rejecting the miraculous element, they have usually regarded the whole narrative as vitiated by it.

On the other hand, the great majority of those who believe that the book was written by Luke in the first century have accepted the miraculous element as a record of events which actually happened, and have been uncritical in their examination of the historical narrative.

The great value of Harnack's work <sup>2</sup> lies in the fact that he rejects the miraculous element (*a*) without postulating a long

<sup>1</sup> Norris, *Introd.*, p. x.

<sup>2</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles* (Williams & Norgate, 1909).



period of time for its growth—he notes <sup>1</sup> that the accretion of legends would be facilitated by the absence of the Apostles from Jerusalem after the first twelve years, and (b) without denying the genuinely historical character of the main part of the narrative. He regards it as ‘historical tradition handed down by enthusiasts’.<sup>2</sup>

It can scarcely be questioned that all parts of the book are not of equal historical value. In some instances we cannot avoid the suspicion that incidents may have been duplicated, or have received a wrong significance; in others, that a growth of legend has attached itself to a real incident.<sup>3</sup> For instance, the account of the death of Judas suffers by comparison with the account in St. Matthew’s Gospel<sup>4</sup>; so too the story of speaking in foreign languages at Pentecost can hardly be maintained by the side of the description of the phenomenon in 1 Cor. xiv. or even in Acts x. 46.<sup>5</sup> There are difficulties in the narrative of the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira which cannot be satisfactorily explained.<sup>6</sup> But it is not justifiable to reject a narrative merely on account of its miraculous character. It is abundantly clear, not only that the early Christians believed in miracles, but that St. Paul claimed, in letters which are accepted as genuine by practically all critics, to have himself worked miracles, and appealed to them as among the credentials of his Apostleship.<sup>7</sup> That fact remains, even if the author of the Acts wrote in the second century. And in the ‘we’-sections, which all critics regard as the travel-diary of a contemporary, the miraculous element is found where, as at Philippi, the writer was a witness and an actor.

II. Baur and Zeller held that the book was written with a doctrinal object. It was the work of a second-century writer who held strong views about the controversies of his own day and wrote a coloured history of the early Church in order to influence those contemporary controversies. The existence of a fundamental opposition between St. Paul and the Twelve was, they held, concealed, and their relations idealized and harmonized. Hence Peter was represented as liberal in his

<sup>1</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 156.

<sup>4</sup> See note on chap. i. 18.

<sup>6</sup> See note on chap. v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>5</sup> See introduction to chap. ii.

<sup>7</sup> See introduction to chap. iii.

<sup>3</sup> Ropes, p. 31.

views, as the first to admit Gentiles to the Church, as declaring that the Law was an intolerable yoke: while Paul was pictured as a Jew who observed the Law and always preached in the first place to Jews. Schneckenburger, who regards the book as a defence of Paul against the attacks of the Judaizers, traces throughout a parallelism between Peter and Paul, the aim being to make the difference between them trifling and unessential. Paul is the author's hero: he wishes to show his Apostolic rank—that he was not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles. So he takes Peter as the foremost representative of the Twelve, and proves Paul's complete equality with him. His choice of incidents is largely determined by this object.<sup>1</sup>

Now there is unquestionably an element of truth in this parallelism, as is clearly proved by the following examples:—

## ST. PETER.

Heals a man lame from birth.  
iii. 2.

Denounces judgment on Ananias. v. 5.

His shadow heals. v. 15.

Is persecuted by Sadducees and supported by a Pharisee. v. 17, 34.

Rebukes a sorcerer. viii. 20.

Heals Aeneas. ix. 34.

Raises Dorcas. ix. 40.

His first Gentile convert a member of the noble Cornelian house. x. 1.

Is led by a vision to preach to Gentiles. x. 20.

Is revered by the Centurion. x. 26.

The Holy Spirit falls upon his converts. x. 44.

Is delivered from prison by an angel. xii. 7.

## ST. PAUL.

Heals a man lame from birth.  
xiv. 8.

Denounces judgment on Elymas. xiii. 11.

His aprons heal. xix. 12.

Is persecuted by Sadducees and supported by Pharisees. xxiii. 6, 9.

Rebukes a sorcerer. xiii. 10.

Heals father of Poplius. xxviii. 8.

Raises Eutychus. xx. 10.

His first Gentile convert a member of the noble Aemilian house. xiii. 12.

Is led by a vision to preach to Gentiles. xxii. 17.

Is revered by the jailor. xvi. 29.

The Holy Spirit falls upon his converts. xix. 6.

Is delivered from prison by an earthquake. xvi. 26.

<sup>1</sup> Baur, i. 6; Weizsäcker, i. 239.



These instances—and the number might be increased—show that the author is to some extent influenced in his choice of incidents by the desire to divide the Apostolic honours between St. Peter and St. Paul, as the representatives respectively of Jewish and Gentile Christianity; just as he is unquestionably anxious to show the cordial agreement of the two party leaders on essential points.<sup>1</sup> But the existence of such an aim is no proof of the late date of the book. A personal friend of Paul might well desire to defend him from the charge, which he himself says (xxi. 21) was brought against him, of disloyalty to the religion of the Old Testament, and to supply evidence that his principles were sanctioned by the Apostle of the Circumcision.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, such an aim is a mark of early date, since Jewish influence waned with the influx of Gentiles into the Church.<sup>3</sup>

But, after all, this object was by the way. The writer's main aim was not doctrinal, but historical—to tell how the Church spread from Jerusalem to Antioch; how from Antioch it made a fresh start and took a new departure; and then spread over the provinces of the Roman Empire till it reached the Capital itself.<sup>4</sup>

III. A third ground on which a late date has been assigned to the author is the alleged discrepancies between the Acts and St. Paul's letters. The extraordinarily clever argument of Paley's *Horae Paulinae* is somewhat weakened by being carried beyond its just limits, and is further impaired by the failure to estimate the cumulative force of seeming inconsistencies.<sup>5</sup> Nor is Paley ready enough to make an honest admission of discrepancies where they undoubtedly exist. The difficulty of fully reconciling the account of the visit to Jerusalem recorded in Galatians ii with the visit to the Conference narrated in Acts xv is admitted even by those who identify the visits.<sup>6</sup> But a yet more irreconcilable discrepancy, though it is not so often dwelt upon, is found in Luke's account of Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his

<sup>1</sup> Balmforth, p. 171; Reuss, ii. 300; Pfleiderer, *Paulinism*, ii. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Simcox, p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> Rendall, *Acts*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Iverach, p. 77.

<sup>5</sup> Jowett, *The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 202 seq.

<sup>6</sup> See introduction to chap. xv.



conversion as compared with Paul's own words in his Epistle to the Galatians.<sup>1</sup> There is no honest course here but to admit the discrepancy and our inability to explain it satisfactorily. It has been too often the custom, when the Acts and the Epistles conflict, instead of admitting the superior credit of St. Paul's own statements, to attempt to explain away the discrepancies or at least to minimize their importance. We may admit them, and yet decline to draw from them the inference which Baur drew. He thought that they prove the Acts to be a work of the second century. Rather they prove that the author of the Acts was not acquainted with the Letters. But a second-century writer of Church history could not conceivably have been ignorant of the Letters, and would have endeavoured to bring his narrative into agreement with them. And if it be objected that no contemporary writer could betray so inexact a knowledge of Apostolic history, the obvious answer is that, if the author be Luke, he admittedly joined Paul late in his career, and had only second-hand knowledge of earlier events.<sup>2</sup>

IV. A further ground on which a late date has been assigned to the book is the remarkable omissions in the narrative. It is true that one of the most remarkable has disappeared. Since Professor Ramsay has so triumphantly shown the correctness of Renan's identification of the Galatian Churches with those of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, we have no longer to ask how the writer of the Acts could possibly have failed to record the foundation of such important Christian communities. But plenty of omissions remain. Inseparably connected with the journeys of St. Paul are the perils enumerated in 2 Cor. xi. 23 seq. Yet of these very few are recorded in the Acts—the stoning at Lystra and the scourging at Philippi—those are all.<sup>3</sup> Again, why is there no mention of the three years in Arabia (Gal. i. 17)?—of the dispute with Peter at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11)?—of Titus, Paul's constant companion? And there are a score of similar omis-

<sup>1</sup> See note on chap. ix. 30.

<sup>2</sup> A. C. Headlam, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Acts.

<sup>3</sup> Weizsäcker, i. 238.

sions. But it does not necessarily follow that these omissions are all due to ignorance; that the writer was inadequately informed, and therefore cannot have been a companion of St. Paul. A contemporary is not always the best judge of the relative importance of events. Some of the omissions occur in the 'we'-sections, and may be explained by the fact that to one who was himself an actor many circumstances, which it would greatly interest us to be told, were matters of course which seemed to need no recording.<sup>1</sup> Further, the omissions may be largely explained by the aim of the writer. If that aim had been to write a biography of St. Paul, we might well have expected many omitted incidents to have been narrated. But if his aim was wholly different; if he wished to trace the development of the Church under the guidance of her Ascended Lord; then Peter or Paul were instruments only in the Divine hand, and events needed to be recorded only as they bore on the history of that development.

If, then, there are no conclusive reasons for assigning a second-century date to the book, what are the arguments in favour of an earlier date?

Four facts are admitted by practically all critics:—(i) that the Third Gospel and the Acts are by the same hand. Not only does the author of the Acts claim to have written a previous work on the Life of Jesus, but both books are addressed to Theophilus, and the identity of style, vocabulary, and treatment of materials is clear and unmistakable. Hence all the arguments in favour of a first-century date for the Third Gospel are available to prove an early date for the Acts. (ii) That the 'we'-sections of the Acts are derived from memoranda by a companion of St. Paul. (iii) That there is no difference of style or diction between those sections and the rest of the book. (iv) That according to an early and persistent tradition the name of the author was Luke.

How do the advocates of a later date deal with this tradition? They adopt one or other of two hypotheses. Either they hold that the author was a second-century Luke, who was wrongly identified by tradition with Luke the companion of Paul; or they hold that Luke the companion of Paul was the

<sup>1</sup> Ropes, p. 294.

author of the 'we'-diary, and that his name thus became attached to the work in which it was incorporated by a later writer.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the first of these hypotheses, the Luke who was St. Paul's companion was a physician (Col. iv. 14); and the evidence that the author of both the Third Gospel and the Acts was a physician is very marked. It is, says Harnack,<sup>2</sup> 'of overwhelming force'. Hence we are driven to assume the existence not only of a second Luke, but of a second Luke who was also a physician: and such an assumption is quite unreasonable.

As regards the alternative hypothesis, if the second-century author of the Acts incorporated the diary of Luke the physician, how came so accomplished a writer to leave the first person unaltered? There is, as has been said, no difference of style or diction between the 'we'-sections and the rest of the book. Is it credible that any writer could have been so skilful as to recast the diary in such a way as to obliterate all original marks of style, and at the same time so clumsy as to leave the first person in awkward contrast to the rest of the narrative?<sup>3</sup> If it be said that the writer, desiring to pose as a companion of St. Paul, deliberately retained the use of the first person, the question at once suggests itself, why did he not adopt the use of the first person at many more points of his narrative?

The conclusion would seem to be (i) that the book is by a first-century author. He makes correct references to scores of facts with a sure touch and hardly a single mistake: and his references are found to be correct, not merely for the conditions which persisted to a later time, but for the special and rapidly changing conditions of the precise time in which St. Paul lived and worked.<sup>4</sup> (ii) That Luke the physician was the author; that he worked into his history passages from his own travel-diary; and that he retained the first person as a modest method of indicating his presence.<sup>5</sup> Not merely is he the only one of St. Paul's known companions who fulfils all the

<sup>1</sup> McGiffert, p. 434 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Luke, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> E. L. Hicks, *Expositor*, IV. i. 415; Ramsay, *Expositor*, Nov. 1907, p. 122.

<sup>4</sup> Ropes, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Hicks, loc. cit.



conditions, but it is hard to see why, unless he was really the author, the authorship came to be ascribed by tradition to one who fills so small a place in St. Paul's letters. His name occurs but three times (Col. iv. 14 ; Philem. 24 ; 2 Tim. iv. 11), and without any suggestion that he was a writer.<sup>1</sup>

To what period, then, is the book to be ascribed? The Third Gospel cannot have been written earlier than A.D. 70, the year of the destruction of Jerusalem, since a comparison of Luke xxi. 20 with Mark xiii. 14 and Matt. xxiv. 15 appears to prove that the fall of Jerusalem had already occurred. Hence the Acts cannot have been written much before A.D. 75.<sup>2</sup> If, as Professor Sanday thinks, it was written somewhere between A.D. 75 and 80, the occasional discrepancies with the Epistles and the puzzling omissions may be due to the fact that Luke had not conceived the idea of writing much earlier.<sup>3</sup> He tells us in the Preface to his Gospel that he was stirred to write by the existence of other narratives ; and such narratives were not likely to be numerous before the latter part of the first century. It was not till the expectation of the speedy coming of ' the end of the ages ' and of the return of the Lord to establish His kingdom had begun to weaken that a formal record of the Church's history would be contemplated.<sup>4</sup> Writing years after the events happened, Luke may easily have lost the clue to some dates and to the bearing of some incidents, or have put them into wrong relations.<sup>5</sup> And if the work was not planned till after the death of St. Paul, mistakes and omissions become intelligible, which are inexplicable if Luke had been able to refer to so first-rate an authority at points where his own sources of information were defective.

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It is impossible for me to give credit to all to whom I am indebted in the following commentary. But wherever I have consciously derived ideas or expressions from others, I have given the reference at the foot of the page. And as regards the translation, I have to acknowledge my frequent obligation to the scholarly rendering by the Rev. F. Rendall.

<sup>1</sup> McGiffert, p. 433 seq.

<sup>2</sup> M. Jones, p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> W. Sanday, *Expositor*, v. iii. 89.

<sup>4</sup> Balmforth, p. 166.

<sup>5</sup> Chase, p. 25.

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# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## CHAPTER I

I-3

<sup>1</sup> My first book, Theophilus, was concerned with all that Jesus both did and taught from the beginning, <sup>2</sup> until the day on which he was taken up, after he had through the Holy Spirit given commandment to the apostles whom he had chosen: <sup>3</sup> to whom he also presented himself alive after he had suffered, revealing himself to them by many proofs from time to time during forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

The prologues of St. Luke's Gospel and of his Acts are obviously parallel, and the methods said to have been used in the one book may be applied to the other. Since the Gospel is declared to depend upon written sources, we may assume the same to be true, in some measure at least, of the Acts. And the fact that we possess the earlier Gospel of St. Mark enables us to form a judgment as to the manner in which St. Luke dealt with his materials.<sup>a</sup>

The materials for the early history of the Church recorded in chapters i-xv. 35 may have been gathered by St. Luke at Caesarea during St. Paul's two years' imprisonment there. i-viii. 4 and xii. 1-24 were probably derived from a Petrine source (perhaps through Mark): viii. 5-40 and ix. 26-xi. 18 from a Caesarean source (perhaps through Philip): ix. 1-25 from a Pauline source: and xi. 19-30 and xii. 25-xv. 35 from an Antiochean source (perhaps through Silas).<sup>b</sup> And as regards many portions his informant was probably a woman. There are indications both in the Gospel and in the Acts of his special interest in the part played by women during the Lord's

<sup>a</sup> Harnack, *Luke*, p. 27.

<sup>b</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, ch. v.

ministry and in the early days of the Church. It is clear from internal evidence that the two first chapters of his Gospel were derived from a woman, and the twelfth chapter of Acts was probably derived from a similar source. We may even conjecture her identity. Since there is evidence of his acquaintance with some one connected with the Court of the Herods (see on xiii. 1), his informant may have been Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward.<sup>a</sup>

1. **My first book.** The superlative may be loosely used for the comparative, but it may, on the other hand, imply that Luke intended to write a third book, dealing with the closing years of St. Paul's life. (But see on xxviii. 31.)

**Theophilus.** The epithet 'most excellent', applied to him in Luke i. 3, usually refers not to character but to station (cf. xxiii. 26, xxiv. 3, xxvi. 25), and may denote that he was of equestrian rank. In that case it was probably his baptismal name, since it could hardly have been the birth-name of a Roman official in the first century.<sup>b</sup>

**Jesus.** The traditional title, 'The Acts of the Apostles,' can scarcely be due to Luke himself. It suggests a lower aim than that which he here sets before himself. The Acts of the Ascended Lord were his theme. To Him everything is referred throughout the narrative. Peter and Stephen, Philip and Barnabas and Paul, are only instruments. Luke writes not of men and their doings, but of Christ's doings through men.<sup>c</sup>

**from the beginning.** Cf. Luke i. 2, 'which from the beginning were eyewitnesses.' Commentators, translating literally, 'began both to do and teach,' usually lay an emphasis on 'began'. The Gospel, they say, tells of Jesus' work before His Ascension, the Acts of His work after His Ascension; the one of what He did in person while on earth, the other of what He did by the ministry of His chosen witnesses. But if St. Luke had intended this contrast, he would almost certainly have expressed it more clearly. At the same time, it is true that the history of our Lord's earthly life and the history of His Church are in a very real and deep sense two parts of one whole. The withdrawal of His visible presence did not relegate Him to a place of inaction, whence He only sees, and no longer co-operates with, the work done on earth by His servants.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Professor Sanday, *Sermons on Critical Questions*, p. 123 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 388.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, i. 12.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 7.

2. **through the Holy Spirit.** In these words the author recognizes the complete humanity of the Eternal Son. In the actions of His manhood He required the assistance of the Divine Spirit.<sup>a</sup>

3. **revealing himself.** 'The mystery of these appearances historical criticism is not likely ever to penetrate fully. There can, however, be no doubt that the first disciples passed through real experiences which they believed to be the appearance to them of the crucified and risen Christ. This is demonstrated by St. Paul's inclusion of his own vision with these appearances, and by the unbroken agreement of the early Christians in this faith. They were real events, and their effect was momentous. It is not at all surprising, in view of the excitement of the disciples in those days and of the mysterious nature of the appearances, that the accounts should vary widely, and that it should be impossible to frame a complete and satisfactory narrative from the several statements of the Evangelists.'<sup>b</sup>

**by many proofs.** There is a frank ring of honesty in the words. Luke has no doubt about the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus. And, indeed, few facts in history are better attested. The disciples were not predisposed to believe it. When Jesus died their hopes had died, and they received the first tidings with incredulity (Luke xxiv. 11). But the appearances were repeated, they grew familiar with His look and aspect: they could never suppose that they had been deceived, or had mistaken a phantom for a reality. He spoke with them, conversed with them, showed them that He was unchanged in thought and heart. The most incredulous of them all was convinced by touch. No Thomas doubted now. Never did men proclaim so great a truth with such unhesitating boldness. The glad fact that He was alive had become real to them, a thing to die for.<sup>c</sup>

**from time to time.** He did not, as before, live with them, but 'manifested himself' (John xxi. 1) at intervals and under altered conditions. Thus they were led to realize that a new order had begun. These withdrawals and appearances accustomed them to the thought of an invisible, yet active, Lord.

**during forty days.** This period is only mentioned here. The natural conclusion to be drawn from Luke's Gospel (ch. xxiv) would be that the Resurrection and the Ascension took place on the same day. Here he separates the two events by forty days. The apparent contradiction is explained by the different points of view. The Gospel dealt with the Lord's earthly life, which was closed by the Ascension.

<sup>a</sup> Stokes, i. 21.

<sup>b</sup> Ropes, p. 67 seq.

<sup>c</sup> J. Thomas, p. 17; Dykes, p. 10.

The Acts deals with His work through His disciples, for which the Forty Days were the preparation. But, since both accounts are by the same writer, it is a wholesome warning against the assumption that an author is necessarily ignorant of circumstances which he does not mention.<sup>a</sup>

On the other hand, it is a possible view that the Ascension did take place on the same day as the Resurrection, and so at the beginning, and not at the end, of the Forty Days. Then ver. 3 will be a parenthetical summary of the appearances of the Risen Lord, giving the period of time within which they occurred. This view is borne out by John xx. 17, 18, according to which the only appearance before the Ascension was to Mary Magdalene—‘*Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father*; but go unto my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and to your Father.’ The other appearances would seem to be subsequent to the Ascension. For in John xx. 19-29 (with which occurrence Luke xxiv. 39, 40 should probably be identified) the doubting Thomas was *invited to touch Him*. Further, St. Paul, after speaking (1 Cor. xv. 5 seq.) of the appearances to Cephas, the Twelve, the Five Hundred, James, and all the Apostles, mentions the appearance to himself as the last in a series, unbroken by any mention of the Ascension.<sup>b</sup>

**the Kingdom of God.** The new Society, that is, to be founded in Christ's name. This had been His constant theme during His earthly ministry, but it was not to be fully established while He was still on earth. He taught His disciples to pray, ‘Thy Kingdom come’; and said (Mark ix. 1) that some should not taste of death till they had seen ‘the Kingdom of God come with power’. Now in these forty days He taught them more fully, inspiring them with glorious hopes for the world's conversion.<sup>c</sup>

#### 4-11

<sup>4</sup>And having assembled them with him, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, of which, said he, ye heard from me; <sup>5</sup>that, whereas John baptized with water, ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. <sup>6</sup>They therefore that were come together asked him,

<sup>a</sup> Rendall, l. c.; Baumgarten, i. 13; Maclaren, i. 3.

<sup>b</sup> B. W. Bacon, *Expositor*, March 1909, p. 254.

<sup>c</sup> L. Merivale, p. 1 seq.

saying, Lord, art thou at this time restoring the Kingdom to Israel? <sup>7</sup> And he said to them, It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father hath appointed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit hath come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. <sup>9</sup> And when he had said these things, while they looked, he was lifted up, and a cloud received him from their sight. <sup>10</sup> And while they were intently gazing into heaven, as he went, behold two men in white apparel were standing before them; <sup>11</sup> who also said, Galilaeans, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him going into heaven.

The Acts makes no mention of the return of the Eleven to Galilee after the Passover, as narrated by Matthew (xxviii. 16) and John (xxi. 1 seq.). Their stay there may have been brief. However welcome the repose of the country might have been after the strain of their Lord's Crucifixion and the excitement caused by His Resurrection, nowhere could they secure such an audience for their 'witness' as at Jerusalem.<sup>a</sup>

**4. the promise of the Father.** The gift of the Spirit had been promised by God in the Old Testament through the prophets, e. g. Joel iii. 1-5.

**of which ye heard from me.** Cf. John xiv. 16, 26; xv. 26. This is a valuable hint by one of the synoptic writers of a knowledge of the discourses preserved in the fourth Gospel.

**6. Lord, art thou.** The many questions recorded in the Gospels as put by St. Peter make it probable that he was the mouthpiece of the others on this occasion also.

The Apostles shared, it is plain, the expectation of their times. Trained from their earliest years to connect the Advent of the Messiah with the restoration of the lost dominion of Israel, they found it impossible to grasp the thought of a kingdom 'within the

<sup>a</sup> Swete, 91; Maclaren, i. 4.



soul'. The Gospels show how persistently they clung to the political conception of Jesus' mission. After three years of intimate companionship with Him, they could still dream of high offices for themselves and dispute which of them should be greatest in His Kingdom (Luke xxii. 24). These hopes, dashed by His death (Luke xxiv. 21), had been revived by His Resurrection; and even His fresh instructions 'concerning the Kingdom of God' (ver. 3) had been imperfectly grasped by their preoccupied minds.

The question is valuable evidence of the early date of the source from which this chapter is derived. Such a misconception could not have survived the destruction of Jerusalem; and a later generation would be unlikely to attribute it to the Apostles.

**7. It is not for you.** He does not say that there will be no such restoration. Nor does He correct their misconception as to the nature of the Kingdom: that the promised Spirit would do. But He does say, Leave the future alone: turn from speculation to work. As, on previous occasions, He had answered the curious question, 'Are they few that be saved?' (Luke xiii. 23) with the call to duty, 'Strive to enter in by the narrow door'; and had met St. Peter's speculation about his friend's fate with, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me' (John xxi. 22); so now He warns them against idly seeking to penetrate the future which God had veiled. They were not at the mercy of an impersonal fate, but in the hands of a wise and tender 'Father'.

**8. ye shall receive power.** The power which had been in their thoughts was not for them. But something far better, for which they had not asked—a power infinitely greater than that of any material kingdom—this was for them. How truly that power was given is presently seen in the marvellous change in the mind and conduct of St. Peter.

**ye shall be my witnesses.** He has put aside their speculative inquiry, but He assigns them a great practical work. He leaves His cause in their hands; the spread of the knowledge of Him and of His Kingdom is to depend on them. 'Ye shall be my witnesses.' They are royal words of magnificent and Divine assurance. How deep an impression they made on the minds of the Apostles is shown by their constant use of the word 'witnessing' (ver. 22, ii. 32, iii. 15, iv. 33, v. 32, &c.) as a description of their work.

**in Jerusalem, &c.** The words are a summary of the Acts. Luke evidently regarded them as having a special significance, and took them as defining the plan and scope of the task which he set

himself. But to him 'the uttermost part of the earth' meant the capital of the Roman Empire.<sup>a</sup> No man in the first century could have realized, as we can, the true range of our Lord's words. None the less, in them lay the rebuke to their Jewish dreams. They were to bear their witness, and the kingdom with it, all over the world.

9. **he was lifted up.** It is remarkable that so momentous an event as the Ascension, and one which has always been so prominent in the creed of Christendom, should not be mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew, John, or Mark (Mark xvi. 19 is a later addition), but only by Luke, who, unlike Matthew and John, was not an eye-witness. Moreover, the brevity of Luke's account in his Gospel (xxiv. 51, 52) must be yet further curtailed in the light of modern criticism. 'And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, *and was carried up into heaven.* And they *worshipped him* and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.' The words italicized are regarded by the best critical authorities as a very early interpolation.

The fact of the Ascension is, however, implied in Matt. xxvi. 64, 'Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven'; in John vi. 62, 'What if ye shall behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?'; in John xx. 17, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father,' &c. (cf. also John xvi. 5 seq.). Similarly, while there is no direct reference to the occurrence in any of the Epistles, the fact is implied in Eph. iv. 10, 'He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens' (cf. also Eph. ii. 6, and Phil. iii. 20); in 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'he who was . . . received up in glory': in 1 Pet. iii. 22, 'who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven.'

It will be noted that, while in all these passages the fact of the Ascension is implied, there is no implication of the elevation of the Lord's body. That is stated here only; and it constitutes a real difficulty. 'A cloud received him from their sight'—if that were all, there is no difficulty for the Christian. 'From their sight'—not from hearing of their prayers, not from sympathy with their

<sup>a</sup> The Invader described in the Psalms of Solomon is said to come 'from the uttermost part of the earth' (Ps. viii. 16). If that Invader was Pompey, as is held by Ryle and James (*Introd. to Psalms of Solomon*, p. xl seq.), the words denote Rome.

needs ; not from the range of helpful ministry ; only from their sight. But the elevation of the body—what is to be said about this ?

On this point some excellent remarks by Professor Swete may be quoted in a slightly condensed form : ‘The Ascension presents to many minds a difficulty even greater than the Resurrection. It seems to conflict with even an elementary knowledge of physics. Is it to be believed that, in defiance of the laws of nature, the Lord’s body rose through the air till it reached the bounds of the earth’s atmosphere ; and then, passing through the spaces of the universe, attained by this process of physical translation to the presence of the Infinite Life ? Such a way of conceiving the Ascension is at once a misreading of the historical fact and a misapprehension of the inner truth which it represents. It is a fact that the Lord finally withdrew His risen body from the eyes of the disciples, and that, at the moment of His disappearance, He was engulfed by a cloud which travelled upwards. And this fact was the symbol of a vital Christian truth. . . . The mind naturally connects the higher life which is beyond our present comprehension with the blue heights that are above us. . . . In condescension to this weakness we are permitted to think of our Lord as having “ascended into the heavens”. . . . But the highest heavens may be nearer to us than the nearest object in the physical world. . . . Any view of the Ascension which locates His presence in some distant world would leave out of sight His action upon the living Church to the end of time.’<sup>a</sup>

A few words to the same effect by the Bishop of Gloucester may be added : ‘We have to guard against thinking of the Ascension as a mere change of position from one place to another. As heaven is a state rather than a place, so the Ascension involves a change of the mode of existence rather than a change of position.’<sup>b</sup>

**10. as he went.** The Greek word is the usual one to denote a man going on a journey. No Elijah’s chariot of fire swept Him away. The Ascension was the crowning act of His humanity.

**two men in white apparel.** So two men in dazzling apparel are said (Luke xxiv. 4) to have recalled the women at the Tomb from seeking the living among the dead.

**ON THE VISIBLE APPEARANCES OF ANGELS.** The existence of angels, that is, of intelligent beings intermediate between man and God, presents no difficulty. While it cannot be questioned by those who accept the Bible revelation, even those who reject that revelation may see reason for believing in the existence of an order of

<sup>a</sup> Swete, p. 105 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Gibson, *The Thirty-nine Articles*, p. 190.

beings superior to man.<sup>a</sup> Naturalists have made out a continuous ladder of ascent from vegetable life to man. Is it likely that the ladder ends there? Is man 'to suppose that the hierarchy of beings which rises by such gradual steps from the lowest zoophyte to the race of Newton and Shakespeare does in truth rise no higher; that it stops abruptly at the link which he himself forms between an animal and a personal spirit? Is it not more reasonable to suppose that the upward series continues, and that above man there are beings stretching, in rank beyond rank of ascending excellence, upward towards the throne of the Uncreated and the Eternal?'<sup>b</sup>

And while the existence of angels is thus conformable to analogy, it has abundant confirmation in our Lord's words. To go no further than St. Matthew's Gospel, we have 'The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are angels' (xii. 39); 'The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels' (xvi. 27); 'See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven' (xviii. 10); 'In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven' (xxii. 30); 'He shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds' (xxiv. 31); 'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him' (xxv. 31); 'Then shall he also say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels' (xxv. 41); 'Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?' (xxvi. 53).

Few would wish to explain these utterances as mere accommodations to Jewish methods of thought. At the same time they must be studied in connexion with those methods. The better knowledge now available of the background of later Jewish thought, which lies behind the ideas of New Testament writers, enables us to bring new light to bear upon the problem.<sup>c</sup>

In the last three centuries B.C. the angelology of the Jews was greatly developed. The names of the angels were brought from Babylon, and with the names not a few of the notions regarding them.<sup>d</sup> This development is marked in the Apocalyptic literature

<sup>a</sup> Godet, *Studies on the Old Testament*, p. 2.

<sup>b</sup> E. P. Liddon, *University Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 152.

<sup>c</sup> Ropes, pp. 9, 19.

<sup>d</sup> Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. ii, App. 13.



of the century preceding the Christian era, notably in the Book of Enoch, which had considerable influence in shaping the thoughts of the early Christians. As the awe of the Name of God deepened among the Jews and they conceived of Him as removed to an inaccessible elevation above the world, the more pressing became the need to fill the gap by interposing intermediate beings.<sup>a</sup> 'Those who passed from Judaism to Christianity, and they were almost everywhere the nucleus of the Church, brought with them a full, one might almost call it a monstrous angelology.'<sup>b</sup> The denial of angels by the Sadducees was probably less a denial of their existence than a repudiation of the extravagant angelology current in their day.

It is therefore important to distinguish carefully between the statements of our Lord about angels and the statements about their visible appearances in the narrative portions of the Gospels. 'Our Lord declares the fact of the existence of angels, but He never countenances the idea that they influence human life in the present. All that He says of them has reference to themselves alone or to their relations to men in another life. In particular, He breaks away from the prevailing tendency to make them the intermediaries of revelation. He Himself becomes the sole Revealer; He will be always with His disciples; He will instruct them directly or through the Spirit whom He sends. Thus this part of the doctrine of angels was bound to give way to the Christian doctrine of the abiding presence of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>c</sup>

But it did not give way at once. While visible appearances of angels are conspicuously absent from the narratives of the life of Christ [the unique passage, 'there appeared unto him an angel from heaven strengthening him' (Luke xxii. 43) is badly attested], they abound in the narratives of the Nativity and the Resurrection.<sup>d</sup> Yet there is good reason for reserve in accepting them. Thus, while St. Matthew says (xxviii. 2) 'Behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it,' in St. Mark (xvi. 4) and in St. Luke (xxiv. 2) the women find the stone already rolled away. St. Matthew does not say that the descent of the angel was witnessed

<sup>a</sup> Pfleiderer, *Primitive Christianity*, p. 66.

<sup>b</sup> E. H. Plumptre, *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, art. Angels.

<sup>c</sup> G. B. Gray, *Encycl. Biblica*, art. Angels.

<sup>d</sup> G. B. Gray, *ibid.*



by any one. It looks like a later tradition, or an assumption on his part to explain a known fact.<sup>a</sup>

Again, the appearance of an angel at the Sepulchre (Matt. xxviii. 2), of 'a young man' (Mark xvi. 5), and of two angels (Luke xxiv. 4, John xx. 12) rests on the testimony of the women. 'In the law-courts it is a common experience that even educated and dispassionate witnesses have difficulty in distinguishing between what they actually saw and what they inferred. They are apt, quite honestly, to give their inferences as facts.' Still more is this the case with uneducated and excited witnesses. These women, excited by the extraordinary occurrences, would hardly know themselves what it was that they had perceived. 'Still more certainly those to whom each of them told her experiences would not repeat the story with perfect accuracy.' Very easily might a tradition arise which was due to notions current among the Jews rather than to experience of what actually happened.<sup>b</sup>

Similarly visions, dreams, and appearances of angels in the Acts may be only Luke's own interpretation of what took place, or have been found by him in his sources as the interpretation of others. They and he believed that what happened occurred under divine guidance. That the events were divinely ordered is the essential thing; the manner in which God's will took effect is of small moment.<sup>c</sup> Any person or any thing may be employed by God to intimate His will, to convey His messages to men, or to perform any other service to them.<sup>d</sup> And whoever or whatever was so employed was regarded by the Jews as His angel or 'messenger'. It is to be noticed that the definite ascription of events to angelic agency is confined to those portions of the Acts (v. 19, viii. 26, x. 3, xii. 7, 23) which Luke derived from Jewish sources.

The men of the early Church were, like ourselves, of flesh and blood. We must try to think of them as real, governed by human motives, thinking and acting like the human beings round us.<sup>e</sup> It is no gain to us to have to believe that they were utterly unlike ourselves in their experiences (see further on viii. 26).

**11. why stand ye looking into heaven?** Not a rebuke, but a call to action. Gazing into heaven would not bring back their Master, nor was the visible heaven His dwelling-place. 'This

<sup>a</sup> Plummer, *St. Matthew*, p. 416.

<sup>b</sup> Plummer, *ibid.*, p. 418.

<sup>c</sup> Plummer, *ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>d</sup> Archbishop Whately, *Scripture revelations respecting Angels*, p. 5.

<sup>e</sup> Ropes, p. 34.

Jesus', the same whom they had known and loved, and not another—the same Divine Friend and Brother—would one day come again in visible form. And for a generation they clung to the belief that the coming would be in their own day. The great watchword of the brethren was 'Maran-atha'—'the Lord cometh'. To this they looked forward in eager expectation.

## 12-14

<sup>12</sup> Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is nigh to Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey off. <sup>13</sup> And when they were come, they went into the upper chamber, where they were abiding; namely, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. <sup>14</sup> These all continued with one accord in prayer, together with women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brethren.

**12. they returned.** 'With great joy,' Luke adds in his Gospel (xxiv. 52); though, when the Lord had first spoken of going away, 'sorrow had filled their hearts' (John xvi. 6). They were beginning to understand that 'going away' might mean, not separation, but nearer presence.

**called Olivet.** The expression shows that Luke was writing for one who was a stranger to the locality. In his Gospel he says (xxiv. 50), 'He led them out until they were come over against Bethany.' But Bethany is more than twice 'a sabbath-day's journey' from Jerusalem. The discrepancy, however, is only in appearance. The last scene could not have taken place among human dwellings, and some place half-way between Jerusalem and Bethany would suit the description.<sup>a</sup>

**a sabbath day's journey.** A Greek, writing for Gentiles, would not naturally employ such a measure of distance, so that its use suggests a Jewish source. Chrysostom thinks that the mention of the distance and the method of reckoning imply that the Ascension took place on the sabbath, and not, as we observe it, on the

<sup>a</sup> Swete, p. 103.

Thursday. There would be a symbolical fitness in His entering into His rest on the day of rest.<sup>a</sup> In this case we must assume that the forty days did not include the final gathering on the Saturday.

**13. the upper chamber.** Luke tells us in his Gospel (xxii. 12) of 'a large upper room' where the last supper was eaten. When he speaks of 'the upper chamber', our first impulse is to suppose that he is referring to the room which he had mentioned in his previous work and which was hallowed by such tender associations; and Professor Sanday takes this view.<sup>b</sup> But the Greek words are not the same; that in the Gospel describes the guest-chamber on the first floor, this the loft on the second floor. It is, therefore, probable that this was the room in which Jesus had appeared to the disciples on the evening of the Resurrection (Luke xxiv. 33), and it may have been in the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, where we hear later of a gathering of Christians (xii. 12).

**John and James.** Matthew (xvii. 1) and Mark (v. 37, ix. 2) put James, the elder brother, before John. Luke, in the corresponding passages of his Gospel (viii. 51, ix. 58) has the order reversed, as here. It must be remembered that, when the Acts was written, James was dead, and John was not only living but was a more prominent figure than his elder brother in the Gentile churches for which Luke wrote.

**Simon the Zealot.** So in Luke's Gospel (vi. 16). In Matthew (x. 4) and Mark (iii. 18) he is called 'Simon the Cananaean'. The meaning is the same, but Luke substitutes the Greek for the Aramaic form, as more intelligible to a Gentile reader. The name describes Simon as belonging before his call to a well-known sect among the Jews, and it was retained, after he became a disciple, to distinguish him from the other Simon among the Apostles.

**Judas the son of James.** Called Thaddaeus in Matthew (x. 3) and Mark (iii. 18), probably to distinguish him from the other Judas. He is referred to in John (xiv. 22) as 'Judas, not Iscariot'. The A.V. here translates 'brother of James', identifying him with the author of the Epistle who calls himself (Jude, ver. 1) 'brother of James'. But there is no evidence that they are the same person, and there are obvious objections to supplying the same ellipse differently in the same verse—'son of Alphaeus' and 'brother of James'.

**14. in prayer.** Hitherto the Temple had, for the Jew, monopolized the formal worship of Jehovah. Now a new era had begun.

<sup>a</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> *Sacred Sites of the Gospels*, p. 17.

The hour was come when men would worship the Father without regard to locality or consecrated place.

These ten days of quiet prayer must have been needed. The awful trial of the Crucifixion, the transcendent wonder of the Resurrection, the solemn intercourse of the Forty Days, the crowning marvel of the Ascension—these experiences must have wrought the disciples to an intensity of excitement and expectation.<sup>a</sup> But then, as now, those into whom the Spirit is to breathe His power must be still and prayerful. Outwardly all might seem ready for His coming, but the true preparation must be within.

**with women.** Again, a new era had begun. Among the Jews women were lightly esteemed. In Temple and synagogue they worshipped apart. They took no part in public life. The disciples had marvelled (John iv. 27) that their Master talked with a woman. A Jew might not greet a woman, might not speak even to his wife or daughter, in the street. In his daily prayer he thanked God that he was not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.<sup>b</sup> But at the very birth of the new Society they have their place; an equality of privilege never before dreamt of. Jesus' words to the woman who came to Him for healing of the body only, 'Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity' (Luke xiii. 12), was pregnant with deeper meaning for the whole sex. Because the world's Redeemer was 'born of a woman' (Gal. iv. 4), Christianity broke the woman's fetters. In Christ Jesus there is 'neither male nor female' (Gal. iii. 28).

**Mary the mother of Jesus.** Legend and tradition have their stories about her, but she appears for the last time in the sacred record as an honoured Christian woman, and no more.

**his brethren.** Here, as in 1 Cor. ix. 5, they are distinguished from the Apostles, showing that 'James, the Lord's brother' is not to be identified with 'James, the son of Alphaeus'. The mention of them in connexion with the Lord's mother (cf. Matt. xii. 46, Mark vi. 3) naturally suggests that they were His real brothers, and not His cousins or sons of Joseph by a previous marriage.

We know from St. John's Gospel (vii. 5) that at one time 'his brethren did not believe on him'. It is, perhaps, not surprising that those who had grown up with Him in boyhood should find it hard to accept His claim to be Divine. It is commonly supposed that James was won over by the appearance of the Risen Christ to him (1 Cor. xv. 7), and that he convinced his brothers.<sup>c</sup> But this would

<sup>a</sup> Geikie, p. 20.

<sup>b</sup> David Smith, *In the Days of His Flesh*, p. 77.

<sup>c</sup> McGiffert, p. 549 seq.

be contrary not only to the Divine method of inspiring faith, which is not to be got by signs, but to the other appearances of the Risen Lord, which were confined to believers. It is more likely that the doubts of His brothers had been gradually yielding, and that they were finally convinced by the events of the Crucifixion, which so profoundly moved even the Roman Centurion.<sup>a</sup>

A position of honour appears to have been accorded them in the early community. We know that James exercised later the chief authority in the Church at Jerusalem. Some twenty years after this date they were engaged in missionary work (1 Cor. ix. 5).

THE SPEECHES IN THE ACTS—HOW FAR ARE THEY HISTORICAL? We must not at once dismiss the possibility that they may be due to the literary fashion of the time—that Luke may have conformed to the practice of other ancient historians and put speeches into the mouths of his chief personages. We know, for instance, that Herodotus and Thucydides, Sallust and Livy, habitually composed speeches to embody the arguments which might have been used on any given occasion. When they wished to sum up the *pros* and *cons* of any disputed question, their method was to write two speeches giving the arguments on the respective sides.<sup>b</sup> That this historical method was in vogue in Luke's day is shown by the fact that his contemporary Josephus puts into the mouth of Moses a long speech, beginning, 'Fellow soldiers,' which is in the main a paraphrase of chapters of the Book of Deuteronomy.<sup>c</sup> It is scarcely a paradox to say that it would be more strange if a literary artist, such as Luke undoubtedly was, had discarded the fashionable methods of his day than that he should have employed them. His *bona fides* as an historian is not affected. If the method appears strange to us, we must remember that historical composition was with the ancients part of the art of rhetoric.

Hence, it is legitimate to ask—without in any way prejudging the answer—How far are the speeches recorded in the Acts to be regarded as speeches actually delivered? It is legitimate, because it is quite consistent with the acceptance of the Acts as a trustworthy historical record, and also as a product of Divine inspiration, to recognize that it is a literary work, bearing the impress of the literary fashions of the age which produced it.<sup>d</sup> Inspiration does not eman-

<sup>a</sup> Adeney, *Men of the New Testament*, p. 252 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Gardner, p. 393; Fraser, p. 2 seq.

<sup>c</sup> Simcox, p. 41.

<sup>d</sup> Simcox, p. 39.



cipate a writer from the literary conventions of his own day ; nor does it reveal historical facts any more than it reveals scientific facts. No poorer compliment can be paid to the Bible than to say that, in a matter of history, one set of critical canons must be applied to a secular writer and another set to a Biblical writer.

There are, then, certain points which appear to be practically indisputable :—

1. It is not likely that any one would have made, or preserved, notes of the earlier speeches, in view of the fact that ‘the end of the ages’ was universally believed by the first Christians to be near at hand. (See on iii. 12.)

2. The speeches are, without exception, too short to have been delivered in their present form. They are, at any rate, condensed.

3. The language, which is always (though not in all cases to the same extent) Lukan, both in vocabulary and style, proves that Luke edited, if he did not compose, them.

4. Luke constantly throws his narrative into the form of a speech on occasions when no bystander is likely to have taken notes, e. g. the speeches of Gallio at Corinth, of Demetrius and of the Recorder at Ephesus.

5. Parallel passages in the Synoptic Gospels show that Luke felt himself at liberty to deal freely with his materials. In regard to the sayings of Jesus, he becomes, as we should expect in one with so fine a sense of spiritual things, far less of a composer and more of a compiler.<sup>a</sup> Yet he has no scruples in introducing graphic touches. It will suffice to give one clear example of this :

No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man, and then he will spoil his goods.

Mark iii. 27.

Else how can one enter a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man ? and then he will spoil his goods.

Matt. xii. 29.

When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace ; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

Luke xi. 21.

Here Matthew's record is almost verbatim the same as Mark's, but Luke's is greatly amplified. As Bishop Chase points out,<sup>b</sup> the

<sup>a</sup> Gardner, p. 394.

<sup>b</sup> *Credibility of the Acts*, p. 108 seq.

man who changed in form, and to some extent in substance, the traditional words of Christ, would not hesitate to mould the report of Apostolic speeches.

Hence, we cannot escape the conclusion that the speeches are Luke's compositions, in the sense that he edited them and gave them their literary form. But the question still remains, Are they merely rhetorical compositions? Or had Luke materials for the matter of them? Did he take pains to ascertain the drift of what was actually said, and then clothe it in his own language? The answer to this question may be gathered from the notes on the several speeches. It will be enough at this point to give the general conclusion: The speeches are not entirely rhetorical compositions, but Luke had in some cases either written memoranda or oral traditions, preserving the general substance of what was said; while in other cases he had either personal recollections or conversations with St. Paul or St. Philip to guide him.

With regard to the present speech, it is almost certain (and this consideration applies to the subsequent speeches by Peter) that it was spoken in Aramaic. (The early tradition, preserved by Papias, that Peter took Mark with him, as his interpreter, on his missionary journeys, suggests that, though he must, of course, have been acquainted with Greek, he was not capable of making a speech in that language.<sup>a</sup> The fact, however, that the Greek of Mark's Gospel shows less polish than the Greek of 1 Peter makes it possible that Papias meant by the word which he uses, not 'interpreter', but 'catechist', i. e. a teacher for the further instruction of converts won by Peter's preaching.) Hence the form of the speech must be due to Luke. Also it must be condensed. It is, for instance, scarcely conceivable that Peter could have spoken of the treachery of Judas without one word of reference to his own fall only a few hours later. But, on the other hand, if verses 18-20 be regarded as a parenthesis by Luke, there is not only nothing that might not have been said by Peter, but at least one thing which Luke, the companion of St. Paul, would have been very unlikely to have put into his mouth; namely, the conception (ver. 22) of an Apostle's qualifications.<sup>b</sup>

## 15-26

<sup>15</sup> And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the Brethren (there was a multitude of persons, about

<sup>a</sup> Chase, p. 114 seq.

<sup>b</sup> McGiffert, p. 44.

a hundred and twenty, gathered together), and said,  
<sup>16</sup> Brethren, it was necessary that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David foretold concerning Judas, who became guide to them that took Jesus, <sup>17</sup> that he had been numbered among us and had obtained his portion in this ministry. (<sup>18</sup> Now this man acquired a field with the price of his iniquity; and falling on his face he burst asunder in the midst and all his bowels gushed out. <sup>19</sup> And it became known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem; inso-much that that field was called in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of blood. <sup>20</sup> For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

Let his habitation become desolate,  
 And let there be no man to dwell therein,

and

His office let another take.)

<sup>21</sup> Therefore of the men which companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup> beginning from his baptism by John unto the day that he was taken up from us, of these it is necessary that one become a witness with us of his resurrection. <sup>23</sup> And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. <sup>24</sup> And they prayed and said, Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, declare which one thou hast chosen of these two, <sup>25</sup> to take the place in this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas fell away to go to his own place. <sup>26</sup> And they gave them lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was elected to be the twelfth apostle.

15. **Peter stood up.** Peter, as our Lord Himself recognized, possessed those natural gifts of character and temperament to which men instinctively concede the leadership: and his claim to lead was

now enhanced by the fact that he had been the first of the Apostles to see the Risen Lord (1 Cor. xv. 5). Nor can we doubt that he had also been the first to kindle the faith of the others in His Resurrection. Only on some such supposition can we understand how the disciple, who but a few short weeks before had shamefully disowned his Master, could so soon have recovered the confidence of his brother Apostles. He must also himself have felt the completeness of his Lord's forgiveness and of the restoration of his commission, as told in John xxi.

In the reaction from the extravagant claims made for him by Roman Catholicism, he has not always received the honour which is his due. Though there is no trace of primacy—'The elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder', he says himself (1 Pet. v. 1)—he is unquestionably the most important personage in the early Church.

He is also the Apostle who most attracts us. He is so human: at once, a saint and a blunderer; a generous soul, ardent and impulsive, swept along by a splendid enthusiasm and faith; ever rising on stepping-stones of his dead self to higher things. We know him, as we know no other Bible character, except perhaps St. Paul, and we love him as we love no other.

**in the midst of the Brethren.** We come now to the first corporate act of the new Society. And it is worthy of note that even in a matter so important as the choice of an Apostle the Eleven did not employ the method of co-optation, but sought the co-operation of the general body of disciples. It is the same with the subsequent appointment of the Seven (vi. 2-5). The later division between Clergy and Laity is not found in the early Church. All believers had their part in the decisions of the community.

Whether we have in the proposition to appoint a successor to Judas another instance of Peter's impetuosity, or whether he was divinely directed, has been much discussed.<sup>a</sup> It has been argued that the injunction to act thus may have been among the commands of Christ during the Forty Days. But this is only conjecture, and no such command is pleaded by Peter. What is certain is that the Lord had not Himself filled the vacant place. In 'speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God', He appears not to have prescribed the form which its constitution should take. The Church was endowed with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in order

<sup>a</sup> Green, p. 65.



that she might be able to legislate for herself, and the after-history shows that she did so as occasion arose. We should have expected the Apostles to take no step of importance before they had received the promised Spirit, for whom they had been told to wait, and who was to guide them into all truth. We cannot fail to note that they show no trust in the rightfulness of their own judgment as inspired by God, but look for a revelation of their Lord's will by the mechanical expedient of casting lots.<sup>a</sup>

It may be further urged that later events seem to show that God had His own time and way for filling the vacant place. Paul's Apostleship is beyond question. Either, therefore, Matthias' appointment was premature and void, or we must give up the necessity of the symbolical number twelve, which was made prominent by Christ Himself, who said that the Apostles should one day 'sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel' (Matt. xix. 28). It is true that Paul never claimed to be one of the Twelve, but distinguished himself from them (1 Cor. xv. 5); yet he cannot be classed separately on the ground that he was an Apostle to Gentiles, for he was commissioned to preach to Jews also (ix. 15), and the limitation of the preaching of the Twelve to Israel is contrary to our Lord's command that they were to 'make disciples of all the nations' (Matt. xxviii. 19).<sup>b</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that, when the Apostle James was killed by Herod, we do not hear of any attempt to fill the vacant place. The cases, however, are perhaps not parallel, since it may be said that it was not Judas' death, but his fall from the Apostleship, which necessitated the filling of his place. It was his 'portion in the ministry' (v. 17), which had to be provided.<sup>c</sup>

What happened was probably this: As the Apostles pondered on their charge to be 'witnesses', their thoughts dwelt on the gap in their number, and they wondered who would sit, according to their Master's promise, on the twelfth throne. To these thoughts, perhaps only half expressed, Peter, ardent, impulsive, born to be spokesman and leader, gave a voice. The eagerness to act without a command would only be in accordance with his unreflecting enthusiasm. He was a great Apostle, a good and lovable man; but certainly he was not infallible. If on this occasion, as on so many others recorded in the New Testament, he erred through hasty

<sup>a</sup> Chase, p. 42.

<sup>b</sup> Schaff, i. 275.

<sup>c</sup> A. W. F. Blunt, p. 72.

impulse, we need not hesitate to say so; any more than Paul hesitated to withstand him to the face at Antioch, when he was to blame (Gal. ii. 11 seq.). The Apostles were not supernatural beings, who could neither be swayed by prejudices nor be mistaken in judgment. If we exalt them above our human standards, the beauty and nobility of their lives cease to be realities and to be helpful to our own lives.<sup>a</sup> In the words of St. Paul (xiv. 15), they were 'men of like passions' with ourselves. 'Stand up; I myself also am a man', were St. Peter's own words (x. 26) to one who would have paid him undue reverence.

These is so little power of checking the historical accuracy of these earlier chapters, since they are our only authority for the events narrated, that it is well to note the evidence for the historical character of the narrative. That a choice was made to fill the place of the traitor is confirmed by the fact that both Barsabbas and Matthias are otherwise unknown to us, and it is hard to see any motive for inventing a story in honour of one who has no place in Christian tradition.<sup>b</sup>

**of persons.** *Greek*, 'of names,' which suggests that Luke may have seen a list. But it is a common Hebraism; cf. Rev. iii. 4, 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.' This fact, however, suggests in its turn that Luke had some written account before him.

**a hundred and twenty.** According to St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 6), the Risen Lord 'appeared to above five hundred brethren at once'. That, however, probably occurred in Galilee, and it is not likely that all the five hundred had come to the holy city for Pentecost. But there must have been in Jerusalem more than one hundred and twenty who were in a sense adherents of the new faith. So far, the disciples were not marked off by name or organization into a regular society. The events of Pentecost show (ii. 41) that others were prepared to come forward and join their ranks.<sup>c</sup>

But what a strange disparity between the work and the available working force! Universal conquest, and a hundred and twenty men and women of the humbler class! This little gathering of fishermen and peasants, unlettered and unknown, was the mustard seed, from which was to grow a mighty tree overshadowing the world!

**16. it was necessary.** This had not been Peter's view a few

<sup>a</sup> J. Robertson, p. 193.

<sup>b</sup> Ropes, p. 77; *Church Quarterly*, cxx, July.

<sup>c</sup> L. Merivale, p. 11.

months before (Matt. xvi. 22). Then, he had refused to admit the necessity that the Messiah must suffer, and had sought to dissuade Jesus from going to Jerusalem to finish His course. Now, we find him interpreting the old scriptures in the light of the new faith, seeing in Judas the antitype of Ahitophel, and lifting the whole matter from the level of a wicked man's free act to its place in the higher purposes of Providence. Whence had come this sudden enlightenment? Though Jesus had Himself declared (John xiii. 18, xvii. 12) that the traitor had 'fulfilled the scripture', the psalms which Peter quoted contain no obvious reference to Judas, and the promised Spirit had not yet been given. The fact of the Resurrection had, doubtless, done much to enlighten him; the teaching of the Lord during the Forty Days had done more. Christ had 'opened their mind, that they might understand the scriptures' (Luke xxiv. 45).

We may not see the need for arguments from prophecy in such a matter as the filling of a vacant office. But we must place ourselves in the position of the Apostles. Their Lord had fulfilled the scripture, and they felt that they too had their part to do in completing the fulfilment.<sup>a</sup>

**which the Holy Spirit, &c.** The words give a key to the interpretation of prophecy. *David* did not speak these words about *Judas*: he had no such thought in his mind when he spoke them. But the Holy Spirit spoke them by David's mouth.<sup>b</sup>

**by the mouth of David.** We need not trouble whether this particular psalm was written by David or not. It is enough that it was thought to be his by the men of Peter's generation. What was important to Peter was its Divine authorship: the psalm had been spoken by the Holy Spirit. So we read (2 Pet. i. 20) that 'no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit'. Again, it matters little whether the Second Epistle of Peter is by Peter, or not. These words accurately represent his feeling.

**became guide, &c.** The speech must be greatly condensed. It was a strange irony which laid on Peter, whose own conduct had in its external features come so near to that of Judas, the task of speaking of the latter's treachery. There was, of course, between the two cases, not merely the vital difference of motive, but the difference between a deliberate act and a fall under sudden temptation<sup>c</sup>; but he could scarcely have spoken thus summarily. At first

<sup>a</sup> Fraser, p. 14.

<sup>b</sup> Alford, *Honilies*, p. 45.

<sup>c</sup> Dykes, p. 30.

sight, we might see in the lenient description of Judas, as 'guide to them that took Jesus', a mark of authenticity, as though the memory of his own grievous fall would not allow him to speak in harsher terms.<sup>a</sup> But the words seem to betray a later origin. The traitor's name usually has some descriptive addition to distinguish him from the other Judas 'the son of James'. This, however, would be neither necessary nor natural on the present occasion and at this early date.

17. **that he had been numbered.** The allusion is to Ps. xli. 9. Peter does not quote the passage, because the Lord's words, 'that the scripture might be fulfilled, He that eateth my bread hath lifted up his heel against me' (John xiii. 18), had stamped it upon the memory of them all.<sup>b</sup>

18-19. These verses are perhaps a subsequent insertion of early date.<sup>c</sup> If original, they must be a parenthesis by the historian. No one, speaking in Jerusalem, would narrate details, probably well known to his audience, of an event which had taken place only two months before. Nor would he speak of 'the dwellers at Jerusalem', as if he were a hundred miles away; or translate Akeldama to hearers who knew its meaning. On the other hand, Luke might naturally give such explanations to Theophilus.<sup>d</sup>

It is quite impossible to reconcile this description of Judas' end with that given in Matthew's Gospel (xxvii. 3-8). There, Judas restores the money; here, he retains it; there, the priests buy the field; here, Judas is the purchaser; there, he commits suicide; here, his death may be accidental. The only point common to the two accounts is that the field was called 'the field of blood', and even of this fact a different explanation is given. There, it comes from the use made of the blood-money; here, it comes from Judas' bloody end. It has been suggested<sup>e</sup> that Akeldama may be a corruption of an Aramaic word meaning 'Cemetery'. In this case, Matthew's statement that the field was bought with blood-money, and Luke's that it was so called from the bloody death of Judas, may be different explanations of the corruption; while Matthew's statement that the field was bought as a burial-place for foreigners would be confirmed.

It is obvious that we have before us two traditions, of which that

<sup>a</sup> Dykes, p. 34.

<sup>b</sup> F. Rendall, *Expositor*, III. vii. 355.

<sup>c</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 2627.

<sup>d</sup> Fraser, p. 10.

<sup>e</sup> Plummer, *Matthew*, p. 385.



in the Gospel, though it may have been partially shaped by the wish to bring it into conformity with prophecy,<sup>a</sup> appears to be the earlier and more correct. Popular abhorrence gradually invested the doom of the traitor with lurid circumstances, which later legends further developed into all kinds of horrible details.<sup>b</sup> This process had begun, when Luke wrote some thirty years after the event. The whole spirit of the parenthesis is in marked contrast to Peter's reticent reference to Judas' act as a mysterious catastrophe, ordained and foretold of old.<sup>c</sup>

20. **Let his habitation.** The original passage (Ps. lxi. 25) has 'their habitation'. The historian changes the plural to the singular, in order to make the quotation applicable to Judas. It is a good illustration of the free method of quotation and interpretation of the scriptures by New Testament writers.

It is clear that this verse is part of the parenthesis by the historian, since the Greek words translated 'habitation' and 'office' refer to the pastoral and semi-episcopal functions of an Apostle which could not have been realized at this date. Thus Peter's speech is resumed with ver. 21, and the 'it is necessary' of ver. 22 picks up the 'it was necessary' of ver. 16.<sup>d</sup>

21. **which companied with us.** The Lord had Himself laid down this qualification for His witnesses. 'Ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning' (John xv. 27).

22. **it is necessary.** Twelve was a number with sacred associations. Christ Himself had chosen it, and had spoken of twelve thrones; and now one was missing. But the limitation of the name 'Apostle' to the Twelve soon passed away. Paul, after saying that Christ appeared to 'the Twelve', adds that later He appeared to 'all the Apostles' (1 Cor. xv. 5, 7).

**a witness.** Peter thinks less of the vacant throne than of the defective witness.<sup>e</sup>

**of his resurrection.** The fact was so incredible, and so clashed with popular prejudice, that no one could proclaim it in that age with sufficient conviction who had not himself received irresistible evidence of its truth.<sup>f</sup>

23. **they put forward two.** The whole body of disciples

<sup>a</sup> The passage quoted by Matthew as from Jeremiah is really from Zech. xi. 12, 13, though the Hebrew text does not agree with the quotation.

<sup>b</sup> D. Smith, *In the Days of His Flesh*, p. 474.

<sup>c</sup> Rendall, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Rendall, *Acts*.

<sup>e</sup> Fraser, p. 9.

<sup>f</sup> J. Thomas, p. 33.

(ver. 15), and not the Apostles only, selected two candidates. As Joseph is mentioned first, he was probably the more prominent.

**24. Thou, Lord.** The first recorded prayer to the Risen and Ascended Lord. They turn instinctively to Him; as confidently, as naturally, as if He were still visibly with them. Peter was probably the spokesman, and it is interesting to note the use of the words 'who knowest the heart', since he employs it later (xv. 8). It was, too, he who had said (John xxi. 17), 'Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.'

**which one thou hast chosen.** They may have remembered their Master's own words, 'Did not I choose you the twelve?' (John vi. 70), and 'Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you' (John xv. 16).

**25. his own place.** Contrasted with 'the place in this ministry'. He had been chosen for one place; he had chosen otherwise for himself. There is a natural reserve in the words: no judgment is pronounced: the sinner is left in the hands of God.

**26. they gave them lots.** The erroneous translation 'gave lots for them' has led to the conclusion that this was not an election by lot, but by ballot, that is, that the disciples voted for one or other of the candidates, after praying that God would inspire their choice. But voting by ballot was not a Jewish custom and would not harmonize with the words 'declare which one thou hast chosen of these two'. What they did was to give to each candidate a tablet, bearing his name, to place in the urn: and that which fell out, on the urn being shaken, determined which was successful.<sup>a</sup>

The use of the lot must not be criticized from our point of view. It was the O.T. method of learning the will of Jehovah; and to the Jew it suggested, not a decision by chance, but by the Divine ordering. Nevertheless, it is startling to find the Apostles resorting to it. It is thought by some that it was not the difficulty of choosing between the two candidates which led to its employment, but the unwillingness to appoint a new Apostle on their own authority after they had been themselves appointed by Jesus; just as we see later St. Paul's anxiety to have it understood that he had received his Apostleship, not from men, but from Christ Himself. But the natural inference from verses 22 and 23 is that, if there had been but one candidate, they would have proceeded to make the appointment. Since there were two, they thought that the man chosen by God

<sup>a</sup> Rendall, *Acts*.

might be pointed out by lot, as had been Saul, the chosen King of Israel (1 Sam. x. 20, 21).

This is the only occasion when the lot was used in the history of the Apostolic Church ; and it is significant that it occurs between the Ascension and Pentecost. Subsequently, when the Community had to appoint the Seven Almoners, they elected them by vote (vi. 5) ; and later still (xiii. 2) we find the voice of the prophets recognized as the voice of the Holy Spirit.

It can scarcely be necessary to add that this solitary example of the employment of the lot before Pentecost can furnish no precedent for its use by Christians to relieve them from the responsibility of exercising the powers of judgment given them by God. It is 'unchristian to use any material means for finding out God's will, and unfaithful to do so rather than to pray God to enlighten our souls.'<sup>a</sup>

## CHAPTER II

ON THE SPEAKING WITH TONGUES. There are four passages in which this phenomenon is described, viz. :—

Acts ii. 4-13. The disciples at Jerusalem.

Acts x. 44-7, xi. 15-17. Cornelius and his friends at Caesarea.

Acts xix. 6. The disciples of John at Ephesus.

1 Cor. xiv. 1-33. The disciples at Corinth.

The last of these accounts is the fullest : it is also the earliest in point of date, and is by a writer who not only had personally witnessed the phenomenon, but himself possessed the gift in an exceptional degree (1 Cor. xiv. 18). What, then, do we gather from his account as to its character ?

It would seem to have been an ecstasy, which at moments of great religious fervour seized the early believers. This fervour vented itself in incoherent expressions of praise and thanksgiving, which to the speaker conveyed a sense of communion with God ; and to the hearer an impression of some extraordinary manifestation of power, but not necessarily any instruction, and sometimes had the appearance of wild excitement like that of madness or intoxication.<sup>b</sup>

That this is the correct view is confirmed by experience. It is a historical fact that, in times of greatly quickened religious feeling, emotion finds expression in the utterance of sounds, poured forth

<sup>a</sup> Benson, p. 17 seq.

<sup>b</sup> A. P. Stanley, *Corinthians*, p. 246.

in an ecstasy of praise, but without rational consciousness on the part of the speaker. As St. Paul says (1 Cor. xiv. 14), 'his understanding is unfruitful'. Human language fails; the ordinary forms of speech are broken through; the man becomes the involuntary organ of the Spirit; and he speaks, not to men, but to God (1 Cor. xiv. 2).

Analogies may be adduced from both earlier and later times. We read (1 Sam. x. 5 seq., xix. 20 seq.) of prophets wrought upon by music to a state of frenzy. In early Christianity we read of the Montanists displaying ecstatic excitement of a similar kind. Epiphanius preserves <sup>a</sup> an utterance of Montanus speaking in the name of God: 'Behold, the man is as a lyre, and I play over him like a plectron.'<sup>b</sup> And there have been similar experiences in quite modern times, which it is in no way irreverent to bring forward, if they appear to explain what is recorded in the Bible.<sup>c</sup>

Now, the phenomenon described by Luke as happening at Caesarea and at Ephesus appears to be identical with that which St. Paul describes as happening at Corinth. But these occurrences cannot be placed in a different category from the occurrence at Pentecost, in view of Luke's own words (x. 45), 'On the Gentiles *also* was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit', and St. Peter's words (xi. 15), 'the Holy Spirit fell on them, *even as on us at the beginning*'; and they entirely agree with the account here given in verses 4 and 13. The natural meaning of the Greek expression, translated 'strange tongues' (ver. 4), is 'utterances of an unusual kind'—utterances differing from ordinary speech. And the statement that these utterances made no appeal to unsympathetic hearers, so that they were ascribed to intoxication (ver. 13), is in harmony with St. Paul's words (1 Cor. xiv. 23), 'If there come in men unlearned or unbelieving, will they not say that ye are mad?'

But we are undoubtedly confronted with a difficulty when we turn to verses 5-11. No fair and honest reader can question that Luke says, and means to say, that the disciples at Pentecost spoke in foreign languages, 'Every man heard them speak in his own language' (ver. 6). 'How hear we, every man in our own language, wherein we were born?' (ver. 8).

This assertion is, however, inconsistent, not merely, as has been already pointed out, with x. 45 and xi. 15, but also:—

<sup>a</sup> *Hæc*. xlviii. 4.

<sup>b</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 4762.

<sup>c</sup> Giles, p. 133.



(a) With St. Paul's description of the Gift of Tongues in 1 Cor. xiv. He there ranks the gift of prophecy as higher because more useful (ver. 5): the speaker with tongues does not edify others (ver. 4): he speaks, not to men, but to God, and no man understands him (ver. 2): his utterance is like the inarticulate notes of a musical instrument (verses 7-9): it is useless without an interpreter (ver. 13), and the power of interpretation is itself a spiritual gift (ver. 26 seq.). All this is wholly inconsistent with the idea that the gift lay in the power to speak foreign languages. Such speech would edify those who understood the language, and could be interpreted by any unspiritual person who knew the language. Finally, St. Paul, by comparing it to a foreign language (ver. 11), implies that it was not one.

(b) With other parts of this very chapter of the Acts.. That some of the hearers charged the speakers with drunkenness does not suggest the intelligible use of foreign languages. And St. Peter makes no reference to such use of foreign languages—though the fact would have been a convincing refutation of the charge—but refutes it quite differently by showing that the speakers were fulfilling Joel's prophecy.

(c) With historical facts. It is sometimes said that the miraculous gift was meant to enable the first evangelists to address the people of each country in their own tongue. But nothing could have been more needless. Greek was at this time understood throughout the civilized world. Certainly all the Hellenistic Jews enumerated in verses 9-11 understood it. When some years later (xxii. 2) there was a similar gathering at Pentecost, the mob of fanatics expected St. Paul to address them in Greek, and was surprised when he spoke in Aramaic. Clearly they understood both languages.

(d) With the Divine method of working. It would be a miracle incompatible with the constitution of the human mind. An acquired capacity cannot be instantaneously given.<sup>a</sup> The way in which the Apostles used Greek in their writings shows that they learnt the language in the ordinary way.

If then, we cannot, on the one hand, deny that Luke states that foreign languages were spoken and wishes his statement to be taken literally, and cannot, on the other hand, accept the literal interpretation of his words,<sup>b</sup> we are driven to the conclusion that he had before him two traditions as to what occurred at Pentecost, one earlier and historical, the other later and containing unhistorical elements. Can we trace the origin of the latter?

<sup>a</sup> Zeller, i. 174 seq.

<sup>b</sup> *Idem*, i. p. 191.

It was a Jewish tradition that at Sinai the Voice which spoke the Ten Commandments sounded through the whole earth, accompanied by fiery tokens, and was heard in the seventy tongues of the heathen.<sup>a</sup> The strange expression in Ex. xx. 18—‘All the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet’—gave rise to all kinds of vague speculations. Philo, for instance, describes (ii. 185 seq.) a stream of fire, out of which a voice spoke to each hearer in his own language.<sup>b</sup> But, since the Jews regarded the Feast of Pentecost as the Anniversary of the giving of the Law,<sup>c</sup> and the Sinaitic legislation as a type of the Messianic era, it is not surprising if an attempt were early made by Jewish Christians to represent this decisive event in the history of the Christian community as a counterpart of the great event which was said to have happened on the same day.<sup>d</sup>

The earlier tradition is contained in verses 1-4, 12, 13, and the phenomenon is then identical with that described by St. Paul. The later tradition is contained in verses 5-11, which state that foreign languages were spoken. In favour of regarding these verses as a later account, incorporated by St. Luke in the earlier, is the fact that verse 12 joins naturally on to ver. 4, and that the words in ver. 12, ‘And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying’, appear to be an echo of ver. 7. Further, since verses 2 and 3 recall the legendary phenomena attending the giving of the Law, they too appear to be, at any rate, coloured by, if they are not part of, the later tradition, and the word ‘strange’ in ver. 4 may also be imported.<sup>e</sup>

After all, the Speaking with Tongues is only one element in the record of this momentous event. The essential fact is the communication of the Spirit, and that He was then really given we cannot doubt.<sup>f</sup> Any one who believes that at this time the body of every Christian became the temple of the Holy Spirit will look at the outward wonders as the least marvellous part of the day of Pentecost.<sup>g</sup> From that day forward a new strength, which was not their own, marked all the sayings and doings of the Apostolic Church. It is in this great change of mental and spiritual attitude, rather than ‘in the external signs of wind and fire or in the strange powers of utterance, that we recognize the supreme miracle of the day’.<sup>h</sup> And it is well

<sup>a</sup> Thiersh, p. 65; Zeller, i. p. 203 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Hausrath, ii. 117.

<sup>c</sup> See the Babylonian Talmud, *Pes.* fol. 68 b.

<sup>d</sup> Pfeleiderer, *Primitive Christianity*, p. 14 seq.

<sup>e</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 4767.

<sup>f</sup> A. Robertson, *Hastings’ Dict.*, art. Gift of Tongues.

<sup>g</sup> Farrar, i. 91.

<sup>h</sup> Swete, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 77.

to emphasize this. For 'if it were only a gift of language, then the miracle has nothing to do with us. But if it was the elevating of the natural faculties by God's Spirit to a higher and diviner use, then we have a marvel and a truth which belongs to all ages'.<sup>a</sup> Happily, whatever view we take of the miraculous features in the account, its substantial veracity remains. The historian intends to tell the truth. If in minor details he has erred, he has not thereby thrown discredit on his narrative as a whole.<sup>b</sup>

## I-4

<sup>1</sup> And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from heaven a sound, as of a mighty wind borne onward, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And tongues, like as of fire, were seen by them parting among them, and it sat upon each one of them; <sup>4</sup> and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with strange tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

**I. the day of Pentecost.** The second great Festival of the Jewish year, the day for offering two loaves from the firstfruits of the harvest. It was to prove, ere nightfall, a day of firstfruits to the Christian Church.<sup>c</sup> God honoured Passover and Pentecost, festivals of an economy which was passing away, by making them the starting points of a larger history.<sup>d</sup> Whether the fulfilment of their Lord's promise was definitely looked for by the disciples on this day, we cannot say; but, at any rate, they had assembled 'all together' very early in the morning—it was only 9 a.m. when Peter made his speech—probably with a tenser strain of expectation than on any of the previous nine days.

**all**—not only the 120 of i. 15, for the number would be swelled by large additions. All males were required to attend the Feast, and we know that there were more than 500 disciples in Galilee (1 Cor. xv. 6).

**in one place.** Bishop Chase points out<sup>e</sup> the reasons for thinking that they met in the precincts of the Temple.

<sup>a</sup> F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, iv. 151.

<sup>b</sup> Leathes, p. 7 seq.

<sup>c</sup> Norris, p. 7.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 44.

<sup>e</sup> *Credibility of the Acts*, p. 30 seq.

(a) Josephus says (*Antiq.* xviii. 2. 2) that at Pentecost, as at the Passover, it was the custom of the priests to open the gates of the Temple at midnight.

(b) The Greek for 'in one place' is the very phrase used by St. Paul (1 Cor. xi. 20) of assembling for worship.

(c) 'house' is the term used in the LXX (Jer. xxxv. 4) and by Josephus (*Antiq.* vii. 14. 10) for chambers in the Temple.

(d) 'The multitude came together' (ver. 6) is the phrase used by Luke (Luke i. 10; Acts xxi. 36) of the crowd of worshippers in the Temple.

(e) It would explain the presence of large numbers of Jews of the Dispersion (verses 9, 10).

(f) If the 'house' were not in the Temple, but in one of the narrow streets of the city, it is difficult to see how so vast a multitude could have assembled to hear St. Peter's words.

2. **a sound.** It was not 'wind', but 'a sound as of a mighty wind', and some of those present could scarcely fail to recall the Lord's words, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth' (John iii. 8). He had used the unseen and mysterious wind as a symbol of the Spirit's operation, its sovereign might, its invisible action, its pervasive life-giving power. Similarly, in Ezekiel's vision, we have the same association of the wind with spiritual influences: 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live' (Ezek. xxxvii. 9).

3. **tongues.** Again, it was not 'fire', but 'like as of fire'. Fire had always been, with the Jews, the symbol of the Divine presence (cf. Ex. iii. 2; Deut. v. 4). No symbol could be more fitting to express the Spirit's purifying energy and refining virtue. Once more they must have recalled their Master's words, 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire' (Matt. iii. 11). And the form—'tongues, like as of fire'—was also symbolic. It suggests the chief mode of the Spirit's operation, the practical purpose of His presence, the consecration of speech. He would make those who received Him witnesses to the truth. Together, the fire and the tongue promised the burning zeal—the living, conquering energy—with which they should preach the Gospel and spread the Kingdom.

**upon each one of them.** Not upon the Apostles only, but on the entire assembly. This is clear from Peter's application of Joel's prophecy.

2-3. It has been shown above that the imagery of these verses



may be due to the Jewish tradition of the appearances at the giving of the Law at Sinai. It may be, also, that a later generation, recalling our Lord's comparison of the new birth of the Spirit to the wind, and His promise of a Baptism of the Spirit and of fire, treated the metaphors as literal facts.

Those who feel grave difficulties in the way of understanding these two verses literally may be helped by the following reverent words: 'Some, who do not dream of questioning a miraculous element, as we speak, in the history of the Lord's Ministry and of Apostolic times, read these few words not without a distressing sense of perplexity and misgiving. . . . It may be—I dare not question the possibility—that at this supreme crisis of revelation God willed to "create a new thing in the earth", fiery shapes in the semblance of tongues diffusing themselves on the heads of men. But, to speak with reverent frankness, such a manifestation seems to be a wonder of a different order from the miracles of the New Testament. It would stand alone. . . . May not He, who, by what we call natural means, shrouded the Cross of the Son of God in darkness, have ordained that, at the moment when the illuminating Spirit was poured upon the Church, the sunlight of a new day smote upon the Apostles? And, if so, was it unnatural that Christians should see a deeper meaning in the sun's rays streaming through the colonnades of the temple and resting upon the Apostles? . . . Thus the two outward and visible phenomena in the physical world—the rush of the wind and the apocalypse of the sunlight—marked that morning hour of the day of Pentecost as the supreme crisis of the Church's inspiration and of the Church's enlightenment. In the compressed narrative St. Luke has blended the language of history and the language of the allegorical interpretation of history.'<sup>a</sup>

4. **began to speak.** Realizing that the promise had been fulfilled, they burst under one uncontrollable impulse into praise of God!<sup>b</sup> And who does not feel that the power of speaking foreign languages without the drudgery of learning them would have been a far less fitting result of the gift of the Spirit than this intensity of joy, which found expression in a rapt outpouring of jubilant praise and thanksgiving for which language proved altogether inadequate?

### 5-13

<sup>δ</sup> Now there were sojourning at Jerusalem Jews,

<sup>a</sup> Chase, p. 33 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Purves, p. 27.

devout men, from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> And when this voice was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because every man heard them speaking in his own language. <sup>7</sup> And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? <sup>8</sup> And how hear we, every man, in our own language wherein we were born? <sup>9</sup> Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia; in Judaea and Cappadocia, <sup>10</sup> in Pontus and Asia, and in Phrygia and Pamphylia; in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene; and the visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes; <sup>11</sup> Cretes and Arabians; how hear we them speaking in our tongues the great things of God? <sup>12</sup> And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this? <sup>13</sup> But others mocking said, They are full of sweet wine.

5. **sojourning**, i. e. staying temporarily for the Feast. Pentecost, falling at a season of the year when travel by sea was safest, was more largely attended by pilgrims than any of the other Feasts.

6. **voice**. The confused sound produced by the disciples is spoken of as one voice. So in Rev. v. 11, 'I heard a voice of many angels.'

**came together**. The people would be assembling for the Temple service at the third hour of the day.

9-11. The list presents numerous difficulties. It is made on no discoverable principle as regards either the order of enumeration or the inclusions and omissions. It is quite different in style from Luke's work, and must be derived from some early authority.<sup>a</sup> The strange inclusion of Judaea may be due to an error in the MSS., since Tertullian quotes the passage as '*Armenia* and Cappadocia'; but the omission of such countries as Syria, Cilicia, and Cyprus, where Jews were numerous, is inexplicable. It is significant that, whereas the passage is adduced as evidence that the disciples at Pentecost spoke in foreign languages, it really lends no support whatever to that theory. It is a list of countries, not of languages; and the Jews from those countries did not all speak different languages,

<sup>a</sup> W. M. Ramsay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Phrygia.

but would all have understood Greek: would, indeed, have understood Greek better than the native language of the country in which they lived.<sup>a</sup>

13. The multitude fall, as usual, into two classes, the serious inquirers and the flippant mockers. So, when there came to Jesus a voice from heaven, some 'said that it had thundered; others said, an angel hath spoken to him' (John xii. 29).

#### 14-36

This is the earliest Christian apology, and its grand characteristic is power. 'Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit hath come upon you,' had been Christ's promise, and there is no delay in the fulfilment. Who can read the speech and not feel that, if the gift of Tongues was proof that the Spirit had come, the greater proof was in Peter's words? His life hitherto had shown no little inconsistency, not to say cowardice. Only seven weeks before he had disowned his Lord. But he had spent nine days in prayer and had received the Spirit, and we recall the Master's words, 'It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you' (Matt. x. 20).

The speech is sufficiently like that of St. Paul at Pisidian Antioch (ch. xiii) to show that it is a free composition; and since it is in its literary shape Lukan, it is not safe to lay too much stress on the details. But probably it is substantially what Peter said. The truths here proclaimed must have become at once the subject of the regular teaching of the Apostles, emphasized again and again in the oral instruction given to the disciples. The Aramaic form would later assume a Greek dress, and this may have been the basis of Luke's record<sup>b</sup>; and he would have opportunities of supplementing it by personal inquiry.

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing up with the Eleven, lifted up his voice and spake forth to them, Men of Judaea, and all ye that are sojourning at Jerusalem, be this known to you and give ear to my words. <sup>15</sup> For these men are not drunken, as ye surmise, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. <sup>16</sup> But this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel,

<sup>a</sup> Neander, p. 10 seq.; A. Robertson, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Gift of Tongues.

<sup>b</sup> Gardner, p. 398; Chase, p. 117 seq.

- <sup>17</sup> And it shall be in the last days, saith God,  
I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh ;  
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
And your young men shall see visions and your  
old men shall dream dreams :
- <sup>18</sup> Yea, even on my bondservants and on my hand-  
maidens in those days  
will I pour forth of my Spirit, and they shall  
prophesy.
- <sup>19</sup> And I will show wonders in the heaven above,  
and signs on the earth beneath,  
bloodshed and conflagration and vapour of smoke :
- <sup>20</sup> the sun shall be turned into darkness,  
and the moon into blood,  
before the Day of the Lord come, the great and  
notable day.
- <sup>21</sup> And it shall be that whosoever shall call on the  
name of the Lord shall be saved.
- <sup>22</sup> Men of Israel, hear these words : Jesus of Naza-  
reth, a man proved to be from God to you by mighty  
powers and wonders and signs, which God did by  
him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves know ;  
<sup>23</sup> him, being delivered up by the settled counsel and  
foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of men without  
law crucified and slew : <sup>24</sup> whom God raised up, loosing  
the travail-pangs of death, because it was not possible  
that he should be holden by it. <sup>25</sup> For David saith in  
reference to him,  
I saw the Lord before my face always,  
for he is on my right hand, that I should not be  
moved.
- <sup>26</sup> Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue  
rejoiced ;  
moreover even my flesh shall tabernacle in hope :



<sup>27</sup> because thou wilt not leave my soul to the grave,  
neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see  
destruction.

<sup>28</sup> Thou hast made known to me ways of life ;  
thou shalt make me full of gladness in thy presence.

<sup>29</sup> Brethren, I may speak to you with freedom of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried ; and his tomb is with us unto this day. <sup>30</sup> Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had solemnly sworn to him that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne ;—<sup>31</sup> he, foreseeing this, spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto the grave, nor did his flesh see destruction. <sup>32</sup> This Jesus hath God raised up ; whose witnesses we all are. <sup>33</sup> Being therefore exalted by the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. <sup>34</sup> For David did not ascend into the heavens ; but he saith himself,

The Lord said to my Lord,  
Sit thou on my right hand,

<sup>35</sup> till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.  
<sup>36</sup> Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.

15. **it is but the third hour.** Drunkenness belonged to the night (1 Thess. v. 7), and in the daytime was a mark of exceptional depravity (Is. v. 11). And at 9 a.m. on a Festival no Jew would have broken his fast.

18. **on my bondservants.** Of old, the light shone only on the highest peaks—prophets, and psalmists : now the lowest valleys were flooded by it.<sup>a</sup>

19. **And I will show wonders.** If Peter's object had been merely to identify the ancient prediction with the present event, he

<sup>a</sup> Maclaren, i. 45.

might have stopped with the last verse. The association of the prodigies which were to attend the end of the dispensation with those which marked its beginning was probably due to his idea that the Lord was speedily to reappear<sup>a</sup>; but he may have quoted the words of terror for the sake of the promise with which they end.<sup>b</sup>

**22. of Nazareth.** As Jesus was not an uncommon name among the Jews, the epithet was added for the sake of distinction. But it never occurs in the Epistles, and its use is evidence of the early date of Luke's source. The same early date is shown in the use of 'Christ' (ver. 36; cf. iii. 6, 20) as a designation and not a personal name.<sup>c</sup>

**23. by the settled counsel.** Were these signs of His Messiahship irreconcilable with His death upon the Cross? No; it was God's purpose that the Christ should suffer. The death of Jesus, like the treachery of Judas (i. 16), had been foreordained. But that was no justification of the actors; their guilt remained. They had acted in moral freedom, though they had been the means of accomplishing the Divine purpose. Peter does not touch on the metaphysical difficulty, any more than our Lord did when He said, 'The Son of man goeth as it hath been determined; but woe unto that man through whom he is betrayed' (Luke xxii. 22).<sup>d</sup>

Though the fact of the Resurrection was more prominent in the early teaching of the Apostles than the spiritual significance of Christ's death, these words show that His death was seen to be a definite part of the Divine purpose of redemption.<sup>e</sup>

**men without law,** i. e. the Romans, who were outside the pale of the Mosaic Law. Cf. 'To them that are without law (i. e. Gentiles), as without law' (1 Cor. ix. 21).

**24. whom God raised up.** So far he might have seemed to be merely charging them with the judicial murder of a righteous man. But this righteous man was One whom death could not hold.<sup>f</sup>

This was probably the first public assertion of the resurrection of Jesus. (The announcement on the Easter morning had been met by the report, circulated by the authorities, that His disciples had removed the body.<sup>g</sup>) And the assertion is made, not to men who lived long after the reputed rising from the dead, but to contemporaries, within two months of the event, in the very city where it

<sup>a</sup> Briggs, *Pentecost*, p. 107.

<sup>b</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> A. C. Headlam, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Acts.

<sup>d</sup> Briggs, *Pentecost*, p. 113 seq.

<sup>e</sup> J. A. Beet, *Expositor*, IV. v. 184.

<sup>f</sup> Maurice, p. 23.

<sup>g</sup> Fraser, p. 31; Dykes, p. 72.

occurred ; and it is not controverted. At a time when it was still possible to test the statement, to examine witnesses, to expose fraud, the Apostle openly proclaimed the Resurrection as a fact, needing no evidence, but known to his hearers.<sup>a</sup>

**the travail-pangs of death.** The Kingdom of Death is pictured as labouring in pain to bring the dead to birth. But for the soul of Jesus, the first-begotten from the dead, there were no labour-throes, just as for His body there was no corruption, because in neither His soul nor His body was there stain of sin.<sup>b</sup>

**because it was not possible.** How different this speaker from the Peter who seven weeks before had looked into the empty tomb, and gone away, 'knowing not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead' (John xx. 9) !

25. **I saw the Lord.** The psalm depicts the saint of God as in peril of death, but with an unshaken confidence in God, not for return from death, but for maintenance in life.<sup>c</sup> This fact is obscured by the common mistranslation of ver. 27. None the less, Peter was justified in reading into the words a deeper meaning than any of which the Psalmist was himself conscious, and claiming them as evidence that prophecy had pointed to a resurrection of the Messiah.

30. **had solemnly sworn.** In words, the full meaning of which Solomon could not exhaust, God had sworn to David that He would raise up one of his seed to sit for ever on his throne.<sup>d</sup>

31. **foreseeing this,** i. e. using through the Spirit language which foreshadowed Christ's resurrection. It does not mean that the Psalmist himself foresaw the fact ; though there may be in his words some dawning hope of immortality, some idea that God could not permit the good man to suffer the same fate as the wicked.<sup>e</sup>

32. **This Jesus.** The psalm referred to the Christ, but that fact did not prove that Jesus was the Christ. If, however, Jesus rose from death, that would be conclusive, and he now proceeds to prove this by the testimony of eyewitnesses.<sup>f</sup>

33. **Being therefore, &c.** He carries the argument one step further. Not only had Jesus risen from the dead, but the risen Jesus had been exalted by the right hand of God. And for proof of the fact he appeals, not to the Ascension which only the Apostles had witnessed, but to the evidence of their own senses. The proof

<sup>a</sup> Rendall, *Acts* ; Milligan, *The Resurrection*, p. 32.

<sup>c</sup> Rendall, *Acts*.

<sup>e</sup> Rendall, *Acts* ; Lewis, *Petros*, p. 167.

<sup>b</sup> Stier.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 73.

<sup>f</sup> Fraser, p. 32 seq.

was before their eyes in this new energy from heaven. 'This which ye see and hear' was the crowning demonstration that Jesus was the Christ.<sup>a</sup>

34. **to my Lord.** And this exaltation also was in conformity with Old Testament prophecy, which had said that One, entitled to be addressed as 'Lord', should sit at God's right hand. As the dead Psalmist's words could not apply to his own immunity from death, so it was not David who was called by Jehovah to sit as 'Lord' at His right hand.<sup>b</sup>

36. **whom ye crucified.** The pronoun is emphatic in the Greek. He sets in sharp contrast what God had done to Jesus and what man had done. From God He had received the highest honour; from man the lowest infamy.<sup>c</sup>

If this speech is substantially what Peter said, we may note, first, the courage with which he, who had declared 'I know not the man', proclaims that God had made Him 'both Lord and Christ'; and this in the city in which He had so recently been condemned to death as a malefactor. The Jewish rulers had shown no signs of remorse for their action, and the rancour with which they had pursued the Master was likely to be exercised against His followers. Yet there is no shrinking on Peter's part. If all had ended in the Crucifixion, if there had been no Resurrection, his conduct is inexplicable.<sup>d</sup> And, secondly, we may note the grasp of Biblical truth. We know what Peter had been but seven weeks before. Now he has grasped the Divine purpose in history, and sees that the ages are not unrelated days, but are all one in the scheme of God. The fisherman might know the letter of the Scriptures; but whence came this insight into their spirit? The only possible explanation lies in the fact that between his past and this speech comes the Pentecostal gift.<sup>e</sup>

If, on the other hand, the speech in its present shape owes much, as is certainly the case, to Luke, it is admirable alike in matter and in manner. With what tact the advance is made under cover of quotations from the Scriptures, which the audience would receive with deference, to points of attack! With what ability side-issues are ignored, and every effort concentrated on the proof of the main proposition! With what oratorical skill it begins with 'Jesus, a man', and ends with the grand climax, 'Jesus, both Lord and Christ'!

<sup>a</sup> Fraser, p. 34 seq.; Briggs, *Pentecost*, p. 128; Dykes, p. 74 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Maclaren, i. 61.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, i. 62; Slater, p. 21.

<sup>d</sup> Dodd, pp. 18, 47.

<sup>e</sup> Parker, i. 62 seq.



## 37-41

<sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this, they were sore troubled, and said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? <sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus the Christ for remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call. <sup>40</sup> And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this perverse generation. <sup>41</sup> They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added on that day about three thousand souls.

**38. Repent.** They could not undo their act, but they could 'repent'—could, that is, change their whole attitude of mind towards Jesus. Peter's words show that in his view at this time Christianity was simply Judaism with the belief added that Jesus was the Messiah. Baptism in connexion with the name of Jesus no more involved disloyalty to Judaism than John's baptism had done.<sup>a</sup>

**in the name of Jesus.** This is not inconsistent with the Trinitarian formula given in Matt. xxviii. 19, since the words here denote the confession of faith made by the baptized, and not the form used by the baptizer.<sup>b</sup> There is, however, no evidence that the words in Matthew's Gospel were understood by the early Church to be a form prescribed by Christ for baptizing, though they have been so used ever since the second century. The verse is found in every MS. of the First Gospel, and there is no sufficient ground for questioning its genuineness. But though Matthew wrote the words, it does not necessarily follow that our Lord spoke them. He may have said, 'Baptizing them into my name'; and while Luke found in his sources, and preserved in his history (viii. 16, x. 48, xix. 5), the formula of the first Christian generation, Matthew may have unconsciously put into Jesus' mouth the Trinitarian formula of the next generation with which he was himself familiar.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 58 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> Swete, pp. 74, 77; McGiffert, p. 61; Plummer, *St. Matthew's Gospel*, 1.c.

39. **to all that are afar off.** It is sometimes said that these words refer to the Jewish Dispersion among the Gentiles. But St. Paul's words to the Ephesians (Eph. ii. 13), 'Ye that once were afar off are made nigh in the blood of Christ,' show that the Gentiles may be meant. Still, at this time, Peter could have had no right conception of the mode in which Gentiles were to be admitted. All nations were to be blessed in the seed of Abraham, and he expected Gentiles to come in as proselytes through the gate of circumcision. We see later that the difficulty felt even by the Apostles was not the admission of the Gentiles to the Church, but their admission as Gentiles, by baptism alone, without circumcision. And at this early date, when they looked for a speedy return of their Lord, a world-wide extension of the Kingdom must have been wholly beyond their thoughts.<sup>a</sup>

40. **with many other words.** This shows that Luke did not profess to give more than the substance of what was said.

41. **were baptized.** Private instruction was not needed; their Jewish education sufficed. To the first disciples the Gospel was not a new religion opposed to Judaism, but the fulfilment of Judaism. Any Jew who accepted the truth that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ was admitted to the Church.<sup>b</sup>

**three thousand souls.** They need not have been all admitted on the actual day of Pentecost. 'On that day' may mean, according to regular Biblical usage, 'at that time.'<sup>c</sup> But the number need cause no surprise. The death of Jesus was recent, and the consciousness that a national crime had been committed might easily be roused. Moreover, the remembrance of His teaching and of His miracles was still fresh; and many of these new converts may have been, in a sense, believers already, but have been restrained by timidity or irresolution from an open profession of their faith.<sup>d</sup>

We must not credit the Church in Jerusalem with this full increase. Probably many of the three thousand were pilgrims who returned to their homes after the Feast.<sup>e</sup> Nor must we assume that all became genuine Christians. The episode of Ananias and Sapphira shows that men might, as in other revivals, be carried away by their feelings without any real and permanent transformation of character.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Alford, *Homilies*, p. 111; Pressensé, p. 23; Rackham, *Acts*; J. Thomas, p. 352.

<sup>b</sup> Wernle, i. 133; Reuss, i. 242 seq.

<sup>c</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Purves, p. 30; L. Merivale, p. 17.

<sup>e</sup> Lechler, i. 31.

<sup>f</sup> Neander, p. 22.

## 42-47

<sup>42</sup> And they clave to the Apostles' teaching, and to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread, and to the prayers. <sup>43</sup> And fear came upon every soul : and many signs and wonders were wrought through the Apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all that believed were together, and held all things common, <sup>45</sup> and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need. <sup>46</sup> And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their meals with gladness and singleness of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were seeking to be saved.

**42. the Apostles' teaching.** The ignorance of many of the new converts, drawn to Jerusalem from all parts of the Roman world, must have been great. Some of them may have known nothing of Jesus and His ministry beyond what they had learnt from Peter's speech. In the absence of any written records, the testimony of the Apostles to His life and words naturally formed the basis of the common faith, and was probably the first beginning of that oral narrative which was ultimately embodied in our Synoptic Gospels.<sup>a</sup>

**the fellowship.** This denotes, not the community of possessions, which is mentioned later (ver. 44), though that was one form in which it was manifested, but the 'sense of unity which bound them together. The believers were as one family. During the Lord's ministry the little band of disciples had been a brotherhood with a common purse (John xiii. 29), recruited by the gifts of women and others, who 'ministered to him of their substance' (Luke viii. 3). The Twelve had been steeped in the spirit of this life. By Christ's command they had practised its principles in the earliest mission journey (Mark vi. 8), and they naturally sought now to realize on a large scale the perfect type of all society, the family, as a true expression of the new bond of brotherhood. This 'fellowship' was

<sup>a</sup> Maclaren, i. 80 seq.; Pressensé, p. 42.

chiefly shown in their common meals, but was the note of all their social life.<sup>a</sup>

**the breaking of the bread.** This phrase had become, at the time when Luke wrote, the regular designation of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. x. 16, xi. 24), and he clearly uses it in this sense in xx. 7. Also the double article, 'the breaking' and 'the bread', implies something special.<sup>b</sup> We cannot, however, say that it here refers directly and exclusively to the Lord's Supper. The allusion is to meals taken in common. The disciples did not at this early date partake of a special Communion meal. But their ordinary meals were meals of fellowship with their Lord. The natural inference from Luke xxiv. 30 is that Jesus had habitually given by the act of breaking the loaf a sacramental character to their common meals. He had consecrated table intercourse to be a badge of unity among themselves and a memorial of Himself. So, whenever they ate together, they ate the Lord's Supper. Every meal was sacramental, was a reminiscence of days when men ate and drank with the Eternal God in human flesh.<sup>c</sup>

**the prayers.** They differed, as yet, from their countrymen only in holding Jesus to be the Christ, and they did not feel that this required them to withdraw from the national worship. Thus their prayers were primarily in the Temple (ver. 46, iii. 1). But not exclusively; they gathered for prayer in private houses also (iv. 23).<sup>d</sup>

**43. signs and wonders.** St. Paul's confident assertions in his letters (1 Cor. v. 5, 2 Cor. xii. 12) testify to his consciousness of himself possessing such powers.<sup>e</sup>

**45. according as any man had need.** In ancient states, where no provision was made by the government for the poor and aged, their support was always a difficult problem. But Jerusalem was an exceptionally poor town. It had become the capital from its strength as a fortress, and had none of the advantages which make most capital cities the focus of the national wealth. Shut out geographically from the natural current of commerce, with a territory far from fertile, it afforded little opportunity for the inhabitants to rise to affluence. There was also the demoralization caused by the

<sup>a</sup> J. Armitage Robinson, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Communion; E. L. Hicks, *Expositor*, Nov. 1906; Dykes, p. 105.

<sup>b</sup> S. C. Gayford, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Church.

<sup>c</sup> Rendall, *Acts*; Lechler, i. 45 seq.; McGiffert, p. 68 seq.; Weizsäcker, i. 52 seq.; Dykes, p. 108.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 106 seq.

<sup>e</sup> Baumgarten, p. 28.



vast crowds of pilgrims who periodically thronged the city for the great Festivals, alternating employment and profit with idleness and pauperism.<sup>a</sup> Thus the poverty was not confined to the Church: it was a chronic feature of the city. But it was doubtless found in an aggravated form among the Brethren. The expectation of the Lord's speedy return dominated all their life. They felt themselves to be citizens, not of the present order of things, but of another; and all their interests centred in the future. Looking shortly to receive greater things than could be acquired by human effort, they devoted themselves, not to the ordinary occupations of life, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, but to prayer and praise.<sup>b</sup>

The inevitable result was distress. There were widows, and aged or sickly brethren, to be supported; while many of the new converts, whose homes were in Galilee or elsewhere, probably remained at Jerusalem, without means of earning a livelihood. But there were also well-to-do disciples, and these formed a common fund for the relief of the poor. Belief in the nearness of the Second Advent may have influenced some of them; if the time was so short, it was not worth while to retain provision for the future. Others may have been moved by certain utterances of Jesus, such as 'Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven' (Matt. xix. 21); 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven' (Matt. vi. 19, 20); 'It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God' (Matt. xix. 24). But the dominant motives were clearly the feeling of brotherhood, which would be enhanced by the feeling of isolation from the outside world, and love, born of the joy of their great salvation.<sup>c</sup> In the second century we find in the Epistle of Barnabas (19), 'Thou shalt share with thy neighbour in all thou hast, and must not call anything thine own; for if ye share in incorruptible things, how much more should ye share in corruptible things.'

The plain statements of ver. 44 cannot, however, be regarded as merely a description of Christian brotherhood, which levelled the inequalities of property by unbounded benevolence.<sup>d</sup> Luke's sympathy with religious poverty was strong [compare the way in which he reports our Lord's saying, 'Blessed are ye poor' (vi. 20), with Matthew's version (v. 3), 'Blessed are the poor in spirit'<sup>e</sup>], and he

<sup>a</sup> Simcox, p. 8; J. Thomas, p. 42; E. L. Hicks, *Expositor*, Nov. 1896.

<sup>b</sup> Ropes, p. 172; McGiffert, p. 65 seq.; Wernle, i. 130.

<sup>c</sup> Purves, p. 38; Geikie, p. 18.

<sup>d</sup> Zeller, i. 212.

<sup>e</sup> Simcox, p. 123.

has a little idealized the picture of the early Church. The facts which he himself records confute him. If all members of the Church put the whole of their property into the common stock, there was no need to mention the case of Barnabas (iv. 36). It was obviously exceptional, and, as such, attracted particular attention. Nor is it said that even he made over the whole of his property. And while Barnabas sold his farm, his cousin kept her house, but used it for the benefit of the community (xii. 12). Similarly, during our Lord's ministry, though the wants of the Apostles were supplied from a common purse, they had not surrendered their private property. They had their boats, to which they returned after the Crucifixion (John xxi. 3), and St. John took the Lord's mother to 'his own home' (John xix. 27). Clearly, a complete community of goods was not established. But Luke's account has a sound historical basis. Though all who possessed property did not literally renounce their private interest in it, all did cease to feel that they held it for their own exclusive benefit. They felt that they were trustees and stewards, bound to consider the community rather than the individual. What was any brother's was the brethren's. To men so enthusiastically 'of one heart and soul' separate interests seemed treason and coldness.<sup>a</sup>

Thus the feature of the early Christian community here described cannot be strictly called Communism. It was rather an example of abounding charity. None the less, it approaches unwisely near to an experiment in communism. The Church very soon learnt that to set herself above the material conditions of life was to run the risk of being disastrously recalled to them. Her idealism was early brought into contact with stern reality, when a struggle over the support of the poor grew out of this very community of property (vi. 1). And the impoverished condition of the Church at Jerusalem in later years, which St. Paul sought to relieve by contributions from his Gentile converts, may perhaps be traceable to this experiment.<sup>b</sup>

So far is this example of the early Christians from being obligatory on later generations, that it was not followed in their own age. We find no trace of it elsewhere than in Jerusalem. The Epistle of St. James speaks (ii. 1-4, v. 1-5) of the contrast among the Jewish Christians between the rich and poor as being of a marked character.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Briggs, *Pentecost*, p. 260; Olshausen, p. 414; McGiffert, p. 67; Pfeleiderer, *Primitive Christianity*, p. 31; Dobschütz, p. 143 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Hausrath, ii. 134 seq.

<sup>c</sup> Row, p. 41.

Only the spirit, not the special form, of the sacrifice is a model for the Church of after ages. Christianity recognizes social inequalities, but draws from them opportunities for the exercise of Christian virtues. It says to the rich man, not 'Sell, and rid yourself of the responsibilities of wealth', but 'Use the responsibilities, as a steward of God'.

**46. in the temple.** In spite of the close ties by which they were united, there was no rupture with the national worship. Rather must the Temple service have been filled with fresh meaning to those who understood that Christianity was the spiritual interpretation of Judaism. On the other hand, they were conscious of having saved themselves 'from this perverse generation' (ver. 40), and, in separating themselves from other Jews in order to meet by themselves in private houses, they were paving the way for the independence of the Christian community.<sup>a</sup>

**breaking bread at home.** A meal is meant, as in ver. 42; but here, as there, the context shows that the meal was a religious act.

The partial repetition of ver. 42 in ver. 46 looks as though Luke had incorporated from some other sources the passage about community of property, verses 43-46. Similarly in ch. iv, he appears to have introduced from the same source ver. 32 between verses 31 and 33, which cohere well without it.<sup>b</sup>

**with gladness.** A trumpet-note of joy and triumph, which sounds through the whole Lukan history. 'Vexilla Regis prodeunt.'<sup>c</sup>

**47. having favour.** Their piety was bright and attractive, not repellent.

**the Lord added.** Christ was working for His Church. Peter might plant, but God gave the increase.

**seeking to be saved.** Salvation, in the New Testament, generally means something present, not final.<sup>d</sup> It is a process going on throughout life. So St. Paul says (1 Cor. i. 18), 'The word of the Cross is to them *that are perishing* foolishness; but unto them *which are being saved* it is the power of God'.

## CHAPTER III

THE MIRACLES IN THE ACTS. To many persons in our day the miraculous element in the Bible constitutes a grave difficulty, whereas 'direct interposition, even arbitrary interference, was no difficulty to

<sup>a</sup> Purves, p. 39; Lechler, i. 45 seq.

<sup>b</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 877.

<sup>c</sup> Harnack, *Luke*, p. 163.

<sup>d</sup> Norris, p. 18.

the Jew, to whom Jehovah was the absolute Sovereign of the world, not acting, so far as he could see, according to any established order, . . . the observed uniformity of nature, the indissoluble chain of cause and effect, the absolute certainty of the laws by which all visible phenomena are governed—these are now the stumbling-blocks even to devout minds'.<sup>a</sup> To such persons it is often an intense relief to be assured that it is possible to question the reality of a large number of miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and yet to accept the general truth of the narratives in which they are contained.

'A historian of the eighth to the thirteenth century', says Bishop Stubbs of Oxford,<sup>b</sup> 'will record the current of history with names and dates of incontrovertible authority, and we believe in him so thoroughly that we would risk a good deal on his exact accuracy. And the same man on the same page . . . will tell us a miraculous story of something which he saw with his own eyes, but which we should never think of accepting as possible, and the narration of which we can only receive with the kind assumption that he has told us what he thought he saw. . . . Such episodes constitute no objection at all to the credibility of the author who has introduced them. . . . The intermixture of what is incredible to us is no bar to the acceptance as certain of that which is credible on the same evidence . . . We give a different kind and degree of faith to different sorts of narration.'

What is to be said of the miracles recorded in the Acts?

(a) They do not stand alone. They must be considered in their relation to the advent of Christianity and to the superhuman powers of the Founder of the Church.<sup>c</sup> No one who accepts such stupendous miracles as the Incarnation and Resurrection, who believes that miracles were wrought by Jesus during His ministry, and remembers that He referred to those miracles as evidence of His Divine mission—'Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake' (John xiv. 11)—will be prepared to assert that it is incredible that, when the Apostles went on their mission in His name, He went with them, 'confirming the word by the signs that followed' (Mark xvi. 20).<sup>d</sup>

(b) They receive valuable corroboration from St. Paul. Many years before Luke wrote the Acts, he says: 'In nothing was I behind the very chiefest Apostles, though I am nothing. Truly the signs of an

<sup>a</sup> J. J. S. Perowne, *The Psalms*, Introd. to Ps. lxxiii.

<sup>b</sup> *The Miraculous in the Bible*, Ordination Addresses.

<sup>c</sup> J. H. Bernard, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Miracle.

<sup>d</sup> West, p. 258.



Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works' (2 Cor. xii. 12). Here St. Paul not only appeals to miracles wrought by himself, but declares that miracles were wrought by the other Apostles. And there are other passages in his Epistles which conclusively prove that the Christians of the first century believed in miracles. 'To another gifts of healings in the one Spirit; and to another working of miracles' (1 Cor. xii. 10). 'He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you' (Gal. iii. 5); cf., too, Rom. xv. 18, 19. Similar is the testimony of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews—'God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by manifold powers and by gifts of the Holy Spirit' (ii. 4).

(c) While the narrative of the Acts, apart from the miraculous element, is stamped as authentic, that element is an integral part of it, inextricably involved in the Book, so that it cannot be entirely cut out by any critical process that will bear scrutiny.<sup>a</sup>

(d) Though this miraculous element cannot be eliminated, and though it is found in the narrative of events at which Luke was himself present (xvi. 26),<sup>b</sup> it does not follow that in the earlier chapters, the materials for which he must have gathered from many sources, the miraculous element may not have received a degree of legendary embellishment.

(e) When we speak of Luke as a physician we must be on our guard against assuming that he would employ such methods of critical investigation as we associate with one who has received a scientific education. The training of a Greek physician was not scientific, nor was the line between medical treatment and faith-healing rigidly drawn. It is evident that miracles had a strong attraction for Luke; and we can scarcely acquit him of the charge of heightening a marvel by his way of narrating it. This would seem to him a small matter, for he is exceedingly careless in regard to dates and facts.<sup>c</sup> 'There is scarcely', says Harnack,<sup>d</sup> 'another writer in the New Testament who is so careless a historian. Like a true Greek . . . he is an artist in language; but in regard to subject-matter, in chapter after chapter when he is not an eyewitness, he affords extreme instances of carelessness.'

#### I-IO

There can be little doubt that Luke derived this narrative, directly or indirectly, from Peter. It is marked by the graphic touches

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, pp. 87, 339.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Expositor*, Dec. 1906.

<sup>c</sup> Gardner, p. 386.

<sup>d</sup> *Luke the Physician*, p. 112.

characteristic of Mark's Gospel, which is usually held to be based on Peter's recollections. Compare, for instance, the narrative of the cure of the demoniac child (Mark ix. 14 seq.). The same picturesque details are seen in the narratives of the death of Ananias (vi. 1 seq.), of the raising of Dorcas (ix. 36 seq.), of the conversion of Cornelius (x. 1 seq.), and of the deliverance from Herod's prison (xii. 6 seq.), which must all have come ultimately from Peter himself.<sup>a</sup> Luke, with all 'his genuine Greek delight in telling stories',<sup>b</sup> gives us no similarly graphic details even in his description of events at which he was himself present.

<sup>1</sup> Now as Peter and John were going up into the temple for the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour, <sup>2</sup> a certain man was being carried, that was lame from his mother's womb, whom they used to lay daily at the Beautiful door of the temple, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple : <sup>3</sup> who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms. <sup>4</sup> And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. <sup>5</sup> And he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something from them. <sup>6</sup> But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none ; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus the Christ of Nazareth, walk. <sup>7</sup> And he took him by the right hand and raised him up ; and immediately his soles and ankles were made firm. <sup>8</sup> And leaping up he stood and began to walk ; and he entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God. <sup>9</sup> And all the people saw him walking and praising God : <sup>10</sup> and they began to recognize him as the man who sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple ; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened to him.

1. **Peter and John.** Andrew and Peter, James and John, had, it is likely, been boys together on the shore of Lake Tiberias. But the

<sup>a</sup> J. R. Lumby, *Expositor*, 1. iii. 264.

<sup>b</sup> Harnack, *Luke*, p. 164.

bond between the respective brothers was less strong than that between the friends, Peter and John. They were probably about the same age, for the idea that Peter was older rests only on the fancy of artists. They may have gone together, when the Lord sent out His disciples 'by two and two' (Mark vi. 7), just as they were sent together to prepare the last Passover (Luke xxii. 8). Their close intimacy is shown by many passages in John's Gospel (xiii. 24, xviii. 15, xx. 3, xxi. 7, 21). The contrast in character and disposition—the one ardent and impulsive, the other quiet and thoughtful—may, as often happens, have drawn them together. Their close companionship at the close of the Gospel story and at the beginning of the Apostolic history is a connecting link of great value.<sup>a</sup>

**were going up.** Clearly the words describe their daily practice. The impression, created by the narration of special episodes in these early chapters, that the disciples passed their days in a blaze of publicity, is probably contrary to the real facts. There is no clue to the time that had elapsed since the events recorded in the last chapter, but the excitement of Pentecost had subsided, and the Church had settled down in peace and quiet. Luke, however, having mentioned (ii. 43) that miracles were wrought by the Apostles, singles out, after his manner, one by way of example, either as the most remarkable, or because it led to the first outbreak of persecution.<sup>b</sup>

**into the temple.** There was, as has been already pointed out (see on ii. 46), little at this date to distinguish the disciples from the Jewish Church. They were simply a new and very earnest sect, all the more enthusiastic Hebrews for believing that Israel's Messiah had already come. Years after, we read (xxi. 20) of 'many thousands which have believed', who were 'all zealous for the Law'. So strong among the early Christians were the old Jewish associations that they called their place of meeting a 'synagogue' (James ii. 2). The chief effect of their new faith was to make them more devout Jews than they had ever been. They would recall such utterances of Jesus as 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. v. 20).<sup>c</sup>

**2. lame from his mother's womb.** The infirmity was not the result of accident or disease, but was congenital. He had been born

<sup>a</sup> Howson, *Horae Pet.* pp. 46, 53; Plumptre, *Acts*; Dodd, p. 124; Arnot, p. 89.

<sup>b</sup> J. C. Jones, p. 52; Norris, p. 12; McGiffert, p. 81.

<sup>c</sup> Watson, p. 31; Dobschütz, p. 141; Purves, p. 17; McGiffert, p. 65.

a cripple, and was so helpless that he could not even use crutches, but had to be carried to his station.

**daily.** So that he would be well known by sight to all who lived in Jerusalem.

**at the door.** Where hundreds would pass daily, of whom some would give under the influence of religious feeling, and others that they might be seen of men (Matt. vi. 2).<sup>a</sup>

**the Beautiful door.** It is of no importance that this door cannot be identified ; but it is important to remember that, when an event is related with definite particulars of time and place and circumstance, there is a presumption of its truth. Fiction does not court investigation, when eyewitnesses might still be living.<sup>b</sup>

3. **asked an alms.** He had long ceased to hope for anything else. How could a lifelong cripple dream of a cure ?

5. **expecting to receive something.** Peter's words would do no more than lead the man to expect some larger alms than usual. Though mental emotion may unquestionably have a powerful influence on the physical system, there was in the present case no excitement or highly wrought imagination. The beggar looked for nothing but what he was accustomed to receive from the charitable.<sup>c</sup>

6. **Silver and gold have I none.** We can see the man's face fall at the words, as he turned away in disappointment, if not in resentment at the seeming mockery. But Peter was one who could use St. Paul's words (2 Cor. vi. 10), 'as having nothing, and yet possessing all things' ; and the beggar was to learn how God often answers prayer, refusing the lower blessing asked for, and giving the higher blessing neither asked for nor deserved.

Silver and gold ! The poor man is he who has only these ; the rich man is he who has high ideals and warm sympathies, whose wealth is in his thoughts, his aims, his plans for good. 'Silver and gold have I none.' 'Then,' says the shallow man, who looks only on the surface, 'you can give nothing.' But the poverty which can give nothing may be combined with the power which can give much. Many who, as regards temporal things, can use the Apostle's language, are dowered by God with His richest spiritual things. They give kind looks and pleasant words and spare half-hours, and, not least, their prayers. When Christianity fails to give these, silver and gold are poor substitutes.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> West, p. 257.

<sup>b</sup> Dick, p. 147.

<sup>c</sup> West, p. 263 seq.

<sup>d</sup> Parker, i. 85 ; Lewis, *Petrus*, p. 174 ; Gurney, p. 49 seq.



**In the name.** Peter claims no authority inherent in himself. How different are the imperial words of Peter's Master! 'Peace, be still.' 'I will: be thou whole.' 'Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.' Forth went the omnipotent fiat, and storms were hushed, and lepers cleansed, and death uncrowned!<sup>a</sup>

**of Jesus.** The cripple must have known the name of Jesus. He may often have longed to hear spoken to himself the word which had proved so efficacious for others. The man 'blind from his birth' had 'sat and begged' at the temple (John ix. 1, 8), and the healing at the pool of Bethesda of the man who had been a cripple 'for thirty and eight years' (John v. 5) can scarcely have been unknown to a fellow sufferer.<sup>b</sup>

**the Christ, of Nazareth.** See on ii. 22.

**walk.** Since the command would naturally seem to one so helpless, not only absurd, but a mockery, it is clear that the man's own faith must have been a concurrent factor of the cure. Had he been sceptical, he would not have made a serious effort to obey.<sup>c</sup>

**7. his soles.** The unusual Greek word is a medical term, found in Hippocrates. It is one of the details which betray Luke the Physician. See how he notes in the word 'immediately' that the months of the ordinary cure were compressed into a moment; that the man was lame from his birth, so that it was no case of nervous debility; that he had reached an age (iv. 22) when such cures no longer occur. In the same way he marks with exactness the duration of Aeneas' illness (ix. 33); and describes the complaint of the father of Poplius in technical terms (xxviii. 8).<sup>d</sup> A similar professional feeling may be traced in many passages of his Gospel. Notice his use of the technical expression 'a great fever' (iv. 38); his quotation of the proverb 'Physician, heal thyself' (iv. 23); his statement that 'the power of the Lord was with him to heal' (v. 17); the peculiar phrase, twice repeated, 'Power came forth from him and healed them all' (vi. 19) and 'I perceived that power had gone forth from me' (viii. 46); and his significant substitution (viii. 43) of 'could not be healed of any' for the words of Mark (v. 26), 'had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.'<sup>e</sup>

**8. leaping**—a natural touch. The new-found power was so delightful, that sober walking would not serve. It was a literal fulfil-

<sup>a</sup> Macduff, *Peter*, p. 309; West, p. 271.

<sup>c</sup> Spence, p. 148; Dykes, p. 124 seq.

<sup>e</sup> Howson, *Companions*, p. 61 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Harnack, *Luke*, p. 191.

ment of Isaiah's prophecy (xxxv. 6), 'Then shall the lame man leap as a hart.' One of the predicted signs of the Messiah's advent was exhibited on the most public stage.<sup>a</sup>

10. **began to recognize him.** He must have been for years a familiar figure to those who lived at Jerusalem and frequented the Temple.

## 11-26

<sup>11</sup> And as he held Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in Solomon's cloister, greatly wondering. <sup>12</sup> And when Peter saw it, he answered the people, Men of Israel, why marvel ye at this man? or why gaze ye at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him to walk? <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom ye delivered up and disowned in face of Pilate, when he had given sentence to release him. <sup>14</sup> But ye disowned the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you; <sup>15</sup> and killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead, whose witnesses we are. <sup>16</sup> And by faith in his name his name made this man strong, whom ye behold and know; yea, the faith which came through him gave him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. <sup>17</sup> And now, brethren, I wot that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. <sup>18</sup> But the things which God before announced by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. <sup>19</sup> Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of revival from the presence of the Lord; <sup>20</sup> and that he may send the Christ who was foreordained for you, even Jesus: <sup>21</sup> whom the heaven must receive until the times of reconstitution of all things; of which times God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets who have been since

<sup>a</sup> Gurney, p. 38.

the beginning. <sup>22</sup> Moses said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, as he raised up me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall speak to you. <sup>23</sup> And it shall be that every soul which shall not hear that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. <sup>24</sup> Yea, and all the prophets, from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as spake, they too told of these days. <sup>25</sup> Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. <sup>26</sup> To you first God, raising up his servant, sent him forth to bless you, by turning every one of you from your iniquities.

**11. Solomon's cloister.** On the east side of the Court of the Gentiles; so called because the foundations on which it was built were a remnant of the ancient Temple. For the Apostles it would have sacred associations, as the scene of Jesus' teaching at the Feast of Dedication (John x. 23).

**12. Peter answered.** It is impossible to say to what extent Luke may have had before him some written record of what Peter said now and on subsequent occasions. The words in verse 13, 'The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers,' are the formula with which the first of the 'Eighteen Benedictions' begins; and this looks as though he had had access to some Hellenistic tradition of this speech.<sup>a</sup> But, as Hausrath has pointed out,<sup>b</sup> the five years after the Crucifixion were years of unparalleled excitement. One storm after another passed over Palestine. The destruction of the Samaritans, the fall of Pilate and of Caiaphas, rumours of war on the Euphrates and the Jordan, the overthrow of Herod, the conquest of Damascus, the death of the Emperor, the fall of the Tetrarch and the rise of Agrippa, the attempt to set up Antichrist in the Temple—all these things happened in five short years. Such a period of excitement would not be favourable to the chronicling of contemporary speeches, especially on the part of men who looked for the speedy coming of the Last Day. (See on i. 15.)

<sup>a</sup> Chase, p. 124 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Vol. ii, p. 127.

**Why gaze ye at us?** To most men the situation would have been one of temptation. Admiration is dangerous, and these were men who had spent their lives in a humble station and now found themselves regarded as superior beings. But Peter's one feeling is jealousy for his Lord's honour. The servant disclaims the power which the Divine Master had claimed for Himself. 'That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, and take up thy bed, and go unto thy house' (Matt. ix. 6).

13. **glorified**, not 'hath glorified by this miracle'; but Peter points, as in ii. 23, to God's exaltation of Jesus as the Messiah in contrast to his hearers' rejection of Him.

**his servant**. So again in ver. 26 and in iv. 27, 30. Evidently the thought of Jesus as 'the servant of the Lord' (Is. xlii. 1) was specially present to the early disciples. But they soon passed on to a deeper perception of what He was in relation to God. The designation never occurs again in the New Testament.<sup>a</sup>

**delivered up**, viz. to the Roman power. That was the lowest depth of Israel's degradation. They had handed over their Messiah to the Gentiles. And the Gentile magistrate would rise in the Judgment to condemn them, for he, at any rate, had recognized His innocence.<sup>b</sup>

15. **the Author of life**. Jesus was the source of all life; to the bodies, as well as to the spirits, of men, as the cure before their eyes showed.<sup>c</sup>

17. **in ignorance ye did it**. They had acted wickedly, but they had not wittingly crucified the Messiah. So St. Paul says (1 Cor. ii. 8), 'Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.' The word 'brethren' marks a change of tone. Peter had not softened the stern truth: the death of Jesus was murder, and those concerned in it were murderers: but in offering for their conduct the very defence which the dying Lord had suggested—'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (Luke xxiii. 34)—he opens the door of hope, the blessed opportunity of a new start, when the scales of ignorance had fallen from their eyes.<sup>d</sup>

**your rulers**. The pronoun betrays the Greek historian. Peter would almost certainly have said 'our rulers'.

18. **he thus fulfilled**. By their crime they had been, all unknowingly, working out the purposes of God (cf. ii. 23). The death

<sup>a</sup> Maclaren, i. 124.

<sup>b</sup> Maclaren, i. 103.

<sup>c</sup> Maurice, p. 42.

<sup>d</sup> Parker, i. 93 seq.



of Jesus, so far from invalidating his claim to be the Messiah, confirmed it, since prophecy had declared that the Christ should suffer.

Peter speaks of Jesus' death upon the Cross as another proof of His Messiahship, in addition to His Resurrection and Exaltation. There is no sign here that he regarded it as having an independent value of its own. St. Paul's words, however (1 Cor. xv. 3), 'That which I also received, how that Christ *died for our sins* according to the Scriptures,' imply that this conception of His death did not originate with himself.<sup>a</sup>

19. **that so.** The mistranslation 'when' (A.V.) defers the forgiveness to some future period, whereas Peter's meaning is that 'seasons of revival' are inseparably connected with the penitent's return to God.

20. **that he may send the Christ.** Peter still thinks of the Kingdom as a national kingdom, the second advent depending on the conversion of the Jews. He has as yet no conception of the union of Jew and Gentile in one Church. The return of the Lord would inaugurate the happy age for Israel, and he calls upon his hearers to hasten that return by accepting Him.<sup>b</sup>

21. **reconstitution of all things.** A common phrase in Jewish apocalyptic literature, conveying the idea of the restoration of the world to its original condition when God pronounced it to be 'very good'—the new heaven and new earth of Revelation (xxi. 1).

22. **A prophet.** In the original context (Deut. xviii. 14, 15) there is no reference to the Messiah. It is a promise that God would raise up inspired prophets for the chosen people, in contrast with other nations who depended on sorcery.<sup>c</sup> But the application of the words which Peter makes here was current among the Jews. It is the explanation of the question put to the Baptist (John i. 21), 'Art thou the prophet?'

26. **To you first.** Gentile Christians have learnt to give to the splendid promises of the Hebrew prophets the larger interpretation which was at this time hidden from Peter. To him those promises were national. Not till years later, not without special vision to teach him, did the Apostle of the Circumcision learn to 'call no man common or unclean'.<sup>d</sup>

**raising up.** The Greek word shows clearly that the reference is not to the Resurrection, but to ver. 22, 'a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up.'

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 57.

<sup>c</sup> Rendall, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> McGiffert, p. 63; Fraser, p. 54 seq.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 133 seq.

to bless you. The word is borrowed from the promise to Abraham (Gen. xxviii. 14), 'In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'

## CHAPTER IV

## I-4

<sup>1</sup> And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, <sup>2</sup> being sore troubled that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. <sup>3</sup> And they laid hands on them and put them in ward until the morrow; for it was now eventide. <sup>4</sup> But many of them that heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

**1. came upon them.** This was the first occasion of collision between the new sect and the national authorities. The Captain of the Temple was a Jewish officer of high rank—Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* vi. 5. 3) names him next to the High Priest—in charge of the Levites who guarded the Temple. Being responsible for maintaining order in the sacred precincts, and seeing an excited crowd in the Temple court, he may have been justified in his action. And the priests might not unnaturally assist in the interests of order, though their motive probably was, as is implied in the next verse, jealousy that men not trained in the Rabbinical schools should be teaching in public. It was a more serious matter when they were backed by members of the Sadducean party, which held all the chief offices of state.<sup>a</sup> The Sadducees at this time formed a wealthy oligarchy, and were opposed to all enthusiasm, as endangering the existing order; and they were not likely to view with indifference a recrudescence of that preaching of the Kingdom which they had crushed in the case of Jesus.<sup>b</sup>

The Pharisees, on the other hand, did not display the animosity which they had shown to Jesus. His denunciations of their hypocrisy and formalism had brought Him specially into conflict with them. But the members of the new sect were pious and strict in their

<sup>a</sup> Dykes, p. 143 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Rendall, *Acts*; Hausrath, ii. 146.

manner of life, as the Pharisees themselves were. If we may judge from Gamaliel's speech (ch. v. 34), the tendency at present among the Pharisees was in the direction of toleration, if not approval. Their opposition was to be roused later by the teaching of Stephen.<sup>a</sup>

2. **proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection.** It is doubtful if Luke, though correct in saying that the Sadducees were responsible for the attack, gives a right explanation. Probably he assigns the motive which seemed to him the likely one. But it is not mentioned at the trial on the following day; and the Sadducees were not bigoted theologians, who desired to stop the mouths of those who differed from them. They were politic ecclesiastics, not intolerant dogmatists. If they took active steps against the Christians, it was because the latter were creating excitement and unrest in the city, and needed to have their liberty of speech curtailed.<sup>b</sup>

3. **in ward.** Probably in one of the chambers of the Temple. The Apostles must have recalled the night when their Master had been arrested, brought before the Council, and pronounced worthy of death; and they must have realized their danger.

4. **But**—a significant 'but'. The leaders might be imprisoned, but God's word was not bound.

**five thousand.** The meaning probably is, not that five thousand were now converted, but that the total number of disciples in Jerusalem now amounted to that number.

## 5-12

<sup>5</sup> And it came to pass on the morrow that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup> and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest. <sup>7</sup> And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name, have ye done this? <sup>8</sup> Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, and said to them, Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup> if we are this day examined concerning an act of beneficence done to an impotent man, by whom this man hath been made whole, <sup>10</sup> be it

<sup>a</sup> Green, p. 75; Renan, *Apostles*, p. 131.

<sup>b</sup> Weizsäcker, i. 27; McGiffert, p. 83.

known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus the Christ, of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by that name doth this man stand here before you sound. <sup>11</sup> He is the stone which was set at nought by you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. <sup>12</sup> And by none other is salvation; for there is no second name under heaven that hath been given among men, whereby we must be saved.

**5. in Jerusalem.** The insertion of these words marks the Greek historian. It is obviously out of place in a narrative of events which happened at Jerusalem and in the mention of a Council which always met there.

**6. Annas.** He had been appointed in A.D. 6 by the Roman Governor Quirinius, but was not now holding the office, having been deposed by the Romans in A.D. 14. The inaccuracy is, however, more apparent than real; for, though others were high priests by Roman appointment, Annas' deposition was not recognized by the Jews. Thus St. John, though he calls Caiaphas high priest, says that Jesus was led to his 'father-in-law Annas first' (xviii. 13). It is possible that the Jews kept themselves on the safe side, so far as the Romans were concerned, by giving them a joint presidency in the Sanhedrin. This would explain the expression in Luke's Gospel (iii. 2), 'In the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.' Moreover, the age of Annas, the fact that he had been high priest (Josephus gives the title to all ex-high priests), had seen his son in the office, and was father-in-law of the existing high priest, Caiaphas, would account for his retaining power after he had lost the formal position.<sup>a</sup>

Annas and Caiaphas had been mainly responsible for the condemnation of Jesus, and His two followers must have had an increased consciousness of their peril.<sup>b</sup>

**7. set them in the midst.** Peter and John would recall the last occasion on which they had been together in the Council-hall (John xviii. 16), and who it was who then stood in the place of the accused.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Stokes, i. 182; N. J. D. White, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Annas; J. R. Lumby, *Expositor*, I. ix. 480.

<sup>b</sup> Fraser, p. 60.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, i. 131.

**By what power.** The fact of the miracle was not denied: it was incontestable. The object of the question was to entrap the Apostles into an admission that it was a cure wrought by some other name than that of Jehovah; just as Jesus had been charged (Matt. ix. 34) with casting out devils 'by the prince of the devils'. In such a case, the penalty under the Mosaic Law was death (Lev. xx. 27).

**8. filled with the Holy Spirit.** The place must have recalled to Peter the unworthy part which he had once played there, and he may have felt that now was the opportunity to make what reparation he could for that hour of cowardice. Then he had been 'full' of himself and his fears: now he was full of the Holy Spirit.<sup>a</sup> He was to find his Lord's promise (Luke xii. 11, 12) fulfilled, 'When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, be not anxious how or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say; for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say.'

**9. an act of beneficence.** There is a touch of quiet irony in the words, 'Since we are charged with no crime, but with a kindly action.'<sup>b</sup>

**10. Jesus the Christ.** Peter's defence is that he had employed the name of no false god. It could not be treason to Jehovah to say that the cure had been wrought through Jehovah's predicted Anointed.<sup>c</sup>

**whom God raised from the dead.** Much as the rulers must have heard of the Resurrection since the day when they bribed the Roman soldiers to keep silence, this was probably the first occasion on which it had been formally proclaimed before them. It would have been easy to silence the Apostle, if they could have pointed to an occupied and undisturbed grave. Since they did not do so, the inference is that they could not.<sup>d</sup>

**11. He is the stone.** This verse from Ps. cxviii. occurs in the great Hallel hymn, sung at the Feasts of Passover and of Tabernacles, and so was familiar to the Jews from their childhood. Peter had heard Jesus quote it of Himself (Matt. xxi. 42), and the chief priests had then perceived that it was directed against them: now he applies it expressly to them—'set at nought by you the builders.' Thirty years later, Jesus was still to Peter 'the head of the corner' (1 Pet. ii. 6-8). The passage may have had a special attraction for

<sup>a</sup> Macduff, *Peter*, p. 331; Parker, i. 103.

<sup>b</sup> Stiffler, p. 38.

<sup>c</sup> Dykes, p. 151.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 151; Maclaren, i. 133.



him as he thought of the significance of his own name (Matt. xvi. 18).<sup>a</sup>

**12. by none other is salvation.** The prisoner had arraigned his judges. Now, standing at their bar, he offers them mercy. The original question had not been one of salvation, but of healing a cripple. But to Peter the miracle was only a text. He has passed from the healing of the body to the healing of the soul. Salvation from bodily evil was but an earnest of the one salvation from both physical and moral evil, which Jesus came to work. By His name the cripple had been saved from lameness; by the same name and by no other, could any man be saved from sin and death.<sup>b</sup>

## 13-22

<sup>13</sup> Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and understood that they were common men without learning, they marvelled; and they began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup> And seeing the man that had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say against it. <sup>15</sup> But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the Council, they conferred among themselves, saying, <sup>16</sup> What are we to do to these men? For that a notable miracle hath been wrought through them is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup> But that it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them that they speak no more to any man about this name. <sup>18</sup> And having called them, they charged them to utter no single word nor teach about the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered and said to them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken to you rather than to God, be the judges: <sup>20</sup> for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard. <sup>21</sup> So they, when they had further threatened them, let them go, finding no way of punish-

<sup>a</sup> Fraser, p. 66; Howson, *Horae Pet.* p. 20; Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> Parker, i. 104; Arnot, p. 87; Fraser, p. 68; Dykes, p. 150.

ing them, because of the people; for all men were glorifying God for that which had been done. <sup>22</sup> For the man on whom this miracle of healing had been wrought was more than forty years old.

**13. when they beheld the boldness.** Peter's speeches to the people had been followed by conversions. But these sceptical Sadduces and self-righteous Pharisees were not so stirred. They turn to side-issues. How dared these ignorant laymen to be so bold in their presence?

**and John.** Apparently both Apostles had spoken, but Luke has told only what Peter said (cf. iv. 1). If a record had been kept of one speech, a record would surely have been kept of both. The inference is that Luke was dependent on oral tradition, and embodied its substance in the above speech.<sup>a</sup>

**common men without learning**—men, that is, without official position and untrained in the Rabbinical schools. They were not 'unlearned and ignorant' (A.V.), for the Jews prized education; and John, at any rate, the son of a master-fisherman, would not be illiterate.

**began to recognize them.** The two Apostles may have been seen together in that very hall by some members of the Council on the morning of the Crucifixion.<sup>b</sup> And St. John was personally known to Caiaphas (John xviii. 15). Further, Peter's appeal (ver. 11) to the very passage in the Psalms by which Jesus had roused their resentment (Matt. xxi. 42) may have helped the recognition.<sup>c</sup> But the words mean more than this. Peter's inspired reply was so like the answers of Him who 'spake as none other spake' (John vii. 46), that they were startled. They perceived a likeness between their courage and dignity and the bearing of the Master. They recalled how He had stood, meek but unawed, at that very bar. The same combination of apparent ignorance and of wisdom had marked Him of whom they asked, 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?' (John vii. 15). These untrained men, who had followed Jesus and taken in the words which fell from His lips, were somehow able to see further into the heart of things than the scribes and doctors of the law. It was 'like master, like servant'.

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 372.

<sup>b</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> F. H. Chase, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Simon Peter.

Not for nothing had they been with Jesus. They had caught His spirit, and spoke and bore themselves like Him.

**14. seeing the man.** We are not told whether he too had been arrested or whether he had voluntarily taken his stand by his benefactors. At any rate, 'the man that had been healed' was the best Christian apologist.

**nothing to say against it.** The Greek word is that of their Master's promise (Luke xxi. 15), 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay.'

**16. What are we to do?** Jesus' miracles had presented the same problem. 'What do we? for this man doeth many signs. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him' (John xi. 47, 48).

**17. that they speak no more.** They reach the impotent conclusion that the matter must be hushed up. Professing to be religious men, having before them what seemed to be strong evidence of the Divine origin of Christianity, their one idea is, not to probe the matter to the bottom, but to silence all discussion of it. Is there no lesson for us, who live in days when much that our fathers accepted seems to be upset? We, too, may fear the touch of light, and seek to smother facts that they 'spread no further'.<sup>a</sup>

**19. Whether it be right.** These two men can claim spiritual descent from the Three Children before Nebuchadnezzar—'Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us . . . But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods' (Dan. iii. 17, 18). So Socrates had declared to his judges: 'I will obey God rather than you, O Athenians. If you would dismiss me and spare my life, on condition that I should cease to teach my countrymen, I would rather die a thousand times than accept the proposal.'<sup>b</sup>

**20. we cannot but speak.** They had not been required to unsay what they had affirmed, but only to desist from affirming it in the future. But they accept no such compromise.<sup>c</sup> In this first conflict between the Church and earthly authority, they assert a great principle—that the Christian conscience is the supreme court of appeal. They say with Micaiah (1 Kings xxii. 14), 'As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.' So their words have become sacred watchwords, to which men, who had powers, civil or ecclesiastical, arrayed against them, have turned for comfort.<sup>d</sup> The answer of Bunyan, when imprisoned and forbidden

<sup>a</sup> Dick, p. 67; Dykes, p. 152.

<sup>c</sup> Dodd, p. 11.

<sup>b</sup> Xenophon, *Apol.* xi.

<sup>d</sup> Maurice, p. 56.

to preach, was, 'I am at a point with you. If I were out of prison again to-day, I would preach the Gospel again to-morrow, by the help of God.' 'The powers that be are ordained of God,' says St. Paul (Rom. xiii. 1), and it is a duty to obey them; but if there comes a time, when the soul is hemmed in between the mandate of an earthly ruler and the word of God—when the alternative is to follow Babylon, or to refuse to bow at the sound of cornet, flute, and dulcimer—then to the Christian man a higher duty overrides the lower.

21. **further threatened them.** Weak as their decision had been, their further action was weaker still. It was a lame conclusion to forbid them to preach; when obedience was refused, it was yet lamer to do no more than repeat the prohibition.<sup>a</sup>

22. **more than forty years old.** The physician notes the fact which made the case plainly miraculous.

## 23-31

<sup>23</sup> And being let go, they went to their own people, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup> But they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Master, who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that in them is; <sup>25</sup> who through the Holy Spirit by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say,

Why did the Gentiles rage,

And the peoples imagine vain things?

<sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves in array,

And the rulers were gathered together

Against the Lord and against his Anointed.

<sup>27</sup> For of a truth against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together in this city, <sup>28</sup> to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass. <sup>29</sup> And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings; and grant to thy bondservants that they may speak thy word with all

<sup>a</sup> Dykes, p. 154.

boldness ; <sup>30</sup> and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of thy holy servant Jesus. <sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place was shaken in which they were gathered together ; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and proceeded to speak the word of God with boldness.

**24. lifted up their voice.** The Council had been too weak to show the courage of its opinions. Still, it had decided against the new faith, and that fact must have been a grievous blow. It meant that the hope of a national recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, by a formal reversal of the national judgment which had condemned Him, was at an end. The Apostles could not but foresee that perilous times were before them. They had declared their intention of disobeying the express command of the Council, and they were not likely to receive again the same indulgence as on the present occasion. Yet a hymn of triumphant thanksgiving follows the report of the two leaders. They pray only for courage.<sup>a</sup>

**and said.** Luke gathers the concordant feeling of all into one common expression. The reporting at length of this noble utterance, the earliest recorded Christian hymn, shows how critical the moment was felt to be for the infant Church.<sup>b</sup>

**Master.** Corresponding to the 'bondservants' of ver. 29.

**who didst make.** Only the same creative Power which made the world can now make a way for them.<sup>c</sup>

**25. David.** Neither in the Hebrew text nor in the LXX is Psalm ii. ascribed to David, but the disciples follow the usual practice of the Jews, who ascribed to him all the Psalms not definitely marked otherwise.<sup>d</sup>

**Why did.** From the particular case of the present persecution they rise to the general law of religious history which it illustrated—the opposition between the powers of this world and the Son of God, as set forth in the Second Psalm.<sup>e</sup>

**27. Herod.** It should be noted that Luke alone of the Evangelists records Herod's connexion with the Crucifixion.

**28. thy counsel foreordained.** Nothing 'happens'; all is ordained. They rise above sight and sense to see the Hand which 'shapes men's ends, rough-hew them how they will'.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Dykes, p. 157 : L. Merivale, p. 62.

<sup>b</sup> Olshausen, p. 412 ; Zeller, i. 220.

<sup>c</sup> Stifler, p. 40. <sup>d</sup> Olshausen, p. 412. <sup>e</sup> Pressensé, p. 18. <sup>f</sup> Vaughan, i. 177.



29. **speak thy word.** Their prayer is not for their own safety—that could be purchased only by silence ; nor for the confusion of their enemies—that was in the Lord's hand : but for courage to persevere in the path which led certainly to danger, and possibly to death.<sup>a</sup>

30. **signs and wonders.** The stress here laid on the external aid of miracles, to open a way for the word into the hearts of the people, is evidence that this prayer belongs to the early days of the Church.

31. **the place was shaken.** He who shakes the earth must be its maker. They had cried to God the Maker, and he answers in that character,<sup>b</sup> giving them a token that Almighty power was at hand for their protection. The earthquake is a frequent symbol in the Old Testament of the Divine presence. Cf. Ex. xix. 18, Ps. cxiv. 7 ; and especially Is. vi. 4—a passage which may have influenced the form of the present narrative.

### 32-35

<sup>32</sup> And the multitude of them that believed had but one heart and soul, and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but all things were common to them. <sup>33</sup> And with great power gave the Apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus ; and great grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> For there was not among them one in need ; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, <sup>35</sup> and laid them at the Apostles' feet : and distribution was made to each, according as any had need.

The statement of ii. 44, 45 is repeated without material addition. It may have belonged to the oral tradition of the early Church ; and Luke may have found it inserted at different places in the narratives which formed his sources, and incorporated it twice in his own history. It will be noticed that ver. 32 interrupts the sequence of verses 31 and 33.

<sup>a</sup> Gurney, p. 75.

<sup>b</sup> Stifler, p. 42.

## CHAPTER V

## iv. 36 - v. 11

<sup>36</sup> And Joseph, who by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas (that is, 'son of Exhortation'), a Levite, a Cyprian by birth, <sup>37</sup> having a field, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet. <sup>v. 1</sup> But a certain man, named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a property, <sup>2</sup> and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the Apostles' feet. <sup>3</sup> But Peter said, Ananias, why did Satan fill thy heart, to deceive the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? <sup>4</sup> While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied to men, but to God. <sup>5</sup> And Ananias, as he heard these words, fell down and died: and great fear came upon all them that heard them. <sup>6</sup> And the younger men rose up, wrapped him round, and carried him out, and buried him.

<sup>7</sup> And it was after a space of about three hours that his wife came in, not knowing what had been done. <sup>8</sup> And Peter answered her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea; for so much. <sup>9</sup> But Peter said to her, How was it that ye agreed together to make trial of the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them who buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out. <sup>10</sup> And she fell down straightway at his feet, and died; and the young men came in, and found her dead, and carried her out, and buried her by her husband. <sup>11</sup> And great fear came upon the whole Church, and upon all who heard these things.

36. **by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas.** The name was probably given later, and is here mentioned by anticipation. It may have marked the authoritative recognition of Joseph as a prophet.<sup>a</sup>

**of Exhortation.** The Greek word denotes exhortation, consolation, encouragement—all three. There is no English equivalent which covers the same ground, so that the translator must employ different words according to the context. But since the Hebrew word ‘nabas’ denotes exhortation, that is certainly the meaning here.

**a Levite.** Though Levites were originally assigned no land in Palestine (Numb. xviii. 20), the case of Jeremiah (xxxiii. 7 seq.) shows that they could buy or inherit it. But there was a feeling that the possession of land by a Levite was an irregularity which had crept in; and Luke, who does not usually mention the tribe to which a disciple belonged, may have wished to show that the Christian Church presented a truer picture of what Israel ought to be, even according to the Law, than Israel itself did.<sup>b</sup> But his motive for mentioning the tribe is more likely to have been the same which led him (vi. 7) to record that ‘a great company of the priests’ joined the new society.

**a Cyprian.** He may have been one of the converts gained at Pentecost. If his land was in Cyprus, it might be valuable, since the island was at this time a favourite place of residence.

37. **sold it.** One reason, no doubt, for recording the action of Barnabas was the prominent part which he afterwards played in the history. But there seems to be a further reason. The first converts were probably won, almost without exception, from the lower orders, so that the conversion of a man of substance was an event of importance. And though the sale of property was voluntary and not always complete (ver. 4), and though Barnabas is not expressly said to have given his all, there is little doubt that he did so. We know that later, when travelling with St. Paul, he had to work for his own support (1 Cor. ix. 6). Thus, his case is singled out as one of conspicuous generosity and self-denial; and it was apparently the applause which his act evoked from the Church that tempted Ananias and Sapphira to try to win the same admiration without the same self-sacrifice.

The awkward division of chapters obscures the contrast, which Luke evidently intended to point, between the action of Barnabas and that of Ananias.

<sup>a</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> Alford, *Homilies*, p. 165.

v. 1-11. **Ananias and Sapphira.** There is no serious difficulty in the first part of this narrative. The sudden death of Ananias is explicable on physiological grounds, as the consequence of a violent revulsion of feeling. The motive of his lie was the desire to win credit; and the disclosure of his hypocrisy, at the very moment when he was expecting to be greeted with applause, might easily produce a fatal shock. His doom is not said to have been pronounced by Peter, and may have befallen by natural causes.

The difficulties begin when we pass to the account of the death of Sapphira. And here it is not the pronouncement of her doom by Peter which is the most serious obstacle in the way of an unreserved acceptance of the narrative, since St. Paul states plainly (1 Cor. v. 4, 5) that the power of inflicting temporal judgments for spiritual offences was committed to the rulers of the Church. The difficulties lie elsewhere. Is it conceivable, after making all allowance for the rapidity of burial in the East (due partly to the climate, partly to the fear of defilement by contact with the corpse), that a man of substance, possessed of land, in a country where funerals were conducted with much ceremonial, should be carried off to immediate burial without any communication with his family or his friends? Such action would be, not only a violation of oriental custom, but cruel and heartless in the highest degree. Three hours after his death even his wife had heard nothing. Apparently she had not intended to go herself to the meeting, but was alarmed by the delay in her husband's return. And when she did appear, she was not even then informed of what had happened. It is said by some<sup>a</sup> that Peter's question (ver. 8) was meant as a merciful opportunity for her to separate herself from her husband's sin. Others will rather feel that an Apostle was not likely to put, without any merciful caution, a question the answer to which would, if true, convict her husband of fraud, and, if false, involve her in his guilt. And, once more, when it is said<sup>b</sup> that the punishment for this first fall from the ideal was the same as was meted out to Achan (Joshua vii), who first troubled Israel after the entrance into the promised land, it is sufficient to reply that the New Testament is not the Old, and to recall our Lord's rebuke (Luke ix. 55) to those who looked to it for precedents to guide His followers.

Hence it is difficult to resist the conclusion that, while verses 1-6

<sup>a</sup> e. g. by Maclaren, i. 178.

<sup>b</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

contain a true record of the death of Ananias, which was regarded as a divine visitation on an act of signal meanness, and made a profound impression on the Church, the fact that his wife was known to be 'privy' led later to her death being linked with his by tradition; and that this tradition is found in verses 7-11. (It will be noticed that ver. 11 is an echo of ver. 5.) The significance of the death of Ananias is not affected by a legendary growth in the details. Luke no doubt found the account, as he gives it, in his sources: and it represents the ideas of the primitive Christians.<sup>a</sup>

It has been well said that 'one can no more apply one set of considerations to a Biblical, and another to a profane, author in a historic question than one can use different measures for a church and a dwelling-house. . . . How does inspiration act upon a writer? In two ways: first, by strengthening and intensifying his natural powers; and, secondly, by producing in him . . . an inrush of the superconscious. It makes a man a vehicle of deep-lying forces, so that he builds better than he knows. He may think that he is writing for a society or even for an individual, when he is really writing for future ages and to meet needs of which he is unconscious. But in some aspects the writers of inspired works are as fallible as other men. Inspiration does not reveal to them physical and scientific fact. . . . It does not reveal historic fact.'<sup>b</sup>

1. **But.** One example has been given of genuine self-sacrifice. With it Luke proceeds to contrast the counterfeit. The Acts, like the Bible generally, is marked by its candour. Nothing is kept back. There is no attempt to make men appear better than they really were. Even in the freshness of their enthusiasm, the disciples were not exempt from commonplace temptations and liability to fall before them. The rapid growth of the Church was itself a source of danger. So popular a movement was likely to attract many whose faith was not very real or strongly rooted. The religious emotions might be stirred, without any corresponding quickening of the moral sense.<sup>c</sup>

2. **kept back part.** If their motive had been avarice, they would never have joined a community whose principles and practice had nothing to attract them. They must have joined for reasons not all unworthy. And very possibly it was a pure impulse which led them to sell the land; though it may be that they feared that their

<sup>a</sup> Ropes, p. 80; McGiffert, p. 72; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 370, and *Expositor*, April, 1909.

<sup>b</sup> Percy Gardner, p. 417.

<sup>c</sup> Parker, iii. 293; Purves, p. 40.



reputation would suffer, if they, being known among the disciples to be possessed of property, did not follow the generous example of others. But, after the sale, the sight of the money tempted their covetousness, and they decided to keep back part of it. There was, it was true, no compulsion on them to give to the common fund; nor, if they gave, to give all: but they could not forgo the credit which they had expected to gain for a liberality equal to that of Barnabas, and they agreed together to give a part as the whole.<sup>a</sup>

**his wife also being privy.** He did not yield to a sudden temptation, but had concocted the plan with his wife.

**brought a certain part.** Expecting, doubtless, to be welcomed with high commendation of his zeal and liberality.<sup>b</sup>

**at the Apostles' feet.** Apparently the gifts, devoted to the relief of the poor brethren, were solemnly presented as an act of worship.

**3. why did Satan fill thy heart?** An awful contrast to 'filled with the Holy Spirit'.

**to deceive.** His act was a challenge thrown out to the God of truth.

**4. Thou hast not lied to men.** This is true not merely of sins of falsehood, or of sins in apostolic days, but universally, as David long before had recognized: 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned' (Ps. li. 4).

**5. great fear.** The Church had scarcely realized its own holiness, and the responsibility involved in membership.<sup>c</sup>

**6. the younger men.** The Greek word cannot denote definite officials, since a different word is used in ver. 10. At the same time, it is possible that we have here the germ of the diaconate. Certain younger men may have regularly discharged active duties, as certain elders discharged duties of government. On this occasion they certainly seem to have carried out, unsummoned, functions customarily assigned to them.<sup>d</sup>

**9. make trial of.** As the Israelites 'tempted God in their hearts' by questioning His omnipotence, saying, 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?' (Ps. lxxviii. 18, 19), so Ananias and Sapphira had questioned His omniscience.<sup>e</sup>

**11. the whole Church.** This is Luke's first mention of the Church. It seems as though this Divine visitation served to bring to clear consciousness the solidarity of the Community. Though

<sup>a</sup> Schaff, ii. 166.

<sup>b</sup> Dick, p. 77.

<sup>c</sup> Baumgarten, i. 116.

<sup>d</sup> Olshausen, p. 420; Row, p. 63.

<sup>e</sup> Dick, p. 84.

we cannot be sure that he is not transferring to an earlier period the language of his own time, it may be noted that St. Matthew twice uses the word in reporting utterances of our Lord—‘I will build my Church’ (xvi. 18), and ‘Tell it unto the Church’ (xviii. 17), and that St. Paul uses it in what is perhaps his earliest extant letter, ‘I persecuted the Church of God’ (Gal. i. 13).<sup>a</sup>

11–14. That Luke is here employing the same source from which he had previously taken ii. 43, 47 is clear from a comparison of the two passages :—

ii. 43. fear came upon every soul.	v. 11. great fear came upon the whole Church.
43. and many signs and wonders were wrought through the Apostles.	12. And by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought.
47. having favour with all the people.	13. the people magnified them.
47. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were seeking to be saved.	14. and were more and more added to them, believing in the Lord.

## 12–16

<sup>12</sup> And by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. [And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s cloister. <sup>13</sup> But of the rest durst no man join himself to them; howbeit the people magnified them, <sup>14</sup> and were more and more added to them, believing in the Lord, multitudes both of men and women :] <sup>15</sup> insomuch that they would even carry out the sick into the streets, and lay them on couches and pallets, that, as Peter passed, at least his shadow might fall on one or other of them. <sup>16</sup> There came together also the multitude from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folk, and men vexed with unclean spirits; who were healed every one.

12. **And they were all.** The latter half of ver. 12 to the end of ver. 14 is almost certainly an interpolated fragment which does not fit in with the context.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Lechler, i. 90.

<sup>b</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 45.

**Solomon's cloister.** So far were they from obeying the prohibition of the Council against public teaching that they made the scene of the arrest of Peter and John (iii. 11) a recognized rendezvous for the Church.

**13. of the rest.** That is, the non-Christians, 'all' in ver. 12 being the Christians. To understand 'all' to mean the apostles, and 'the rest' other believers, is to make a gulf of awe and timidity between apostles and believers which is inconsistent with the brotherly fellowship elsewhere depicted.<sup>a</sup>

**durst no man.** The meaning is, not that conversions were checked (the opposite is immediately stated), but that those who were not genuinely of them dared not pretend to be of them, or join the Church for the sake of such help as would come from the community of property.<sup>b</sup>

**14. and women.** The altered position of women under the Gospel seems to have had a special interest for Luke. (See on i. 14.)

**15. that, as Peter passed.** It is not expressly said that they were healed, but the fact may be inferred from the analogous cases of cure effected by touching the hem of Jesus' garment (Mark vi. 56) and by aprons from St. Paul's person (xix. 12). The healing power lay, of course, not in the shadow or the apron, but in the faith of the sufferers—a faith little removed from superstition, for it degraded God's gift to responsible agents into a magical influence seated in their bodies; and it is not said to have been sanctioned by either Peter or Paul. Still, it was faith in the truth of a Divine power working in their midst; and, as such, was higher than the materialism which denies the reality of a spiritual world intersecting the physical world at every point.<sup>c</sup>

**16. from the cities.** This would seem to show that there were believers in the neighbouring villages. At any rate, they would, on their return to their homes, help to form bodies of believers.<sup>d</sup>

## 17-32

<sup>17</sup> But the high priest rose up and all they that were with him (which was the sect of the Sadducees), and were filled with jealousy, <sup>18</sup> and laid hands on the

<sup>a</sup> Lechler, i. 68.

<sup>b</sup> Arnot, p. 124; Benson, p. 87.

<sup>c</sup> Kitto, p. 40; Bishop Woodford, *Sermons on subjects from the New Testament*, p. 79.

<sup>d</sup> Olshausen, p. 422.

Apostles and put them in public ward. <sup>19</sup> But an angel of the Lord opened by night the door of the jail, and brought them out, and said, <sup>20</sup> Go, stand, and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this Life. <sup>21</sup> And when they heard this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the Council together and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. <sup>22</sup> But the officers when they came found them not in the jail : and they returned and told, saying, <sup>23</sup> The prison we found shut in all safety, and the jailors standing at the doors ; but when we opened we found no man within. <sup>24</sup> Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were much perplexed about them, what this might grow to. <sup>25</sup> But there came one and told them, Behold the men whom ye put in the jail are standing in the temple and teaching the people. <sup>26</sup> Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. <sup>27</sup> And when they had brought them, they set them before the Council. <sup>28</sup> And the high priest asked them, saying, We strictly charged you not to teach in this name : and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and are minded to bring this man's blood upon us. <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the Apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men. <sup>30</sup> The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye hanged on a tree and slew. <sup>31</sup> Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Captain and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. <sup>32</sup> And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

**17. But the high priest.** A noticeable feature of this period, as during Jesus' ministry, is the contrast between the attitude of the common people and that of the influential classes.<sup>a</sup> Luke implies that this fresh action of the rulers was due to the rapid growth of the Church, but it is more likely that it was in connexion with the death of Ananias than with works of beneficence. It will be noticed that ver. 17 coheres well with ver. 11; and Luke may have placed verses 12-16, which he found in his sources, in a wrong connexion.

**the Sadducees.** The statement that they were the chief opponents of the early Church (cf. iv. 1) is a mark of historical accuracy, since later on, at the time when Luke wrote, it was legalists, that is the Pharisaic party, who most obstinately opposed the Gospel.<sup>b</sup>

**18. the Apostles.** Apparently the whole Twelve are meant.

**in public ward.** They were not merely detained in custody, as on the former occasion (iv. 3), but were treated as common criminals.

**19. an angel.** A Hebrew way of describing what we call the action of Providence; and probably what is meant is some Divine intervention by natural means, such as connivance on the part of some official.<sup>c</sup> There would be nothing strange if a movement so popular among the people had sympathizers, or even adherents, among the jailors. To question the dress in which the fact is presented is not to deny its providential character. Those who believe in God will see His hand in the usual and regular, as well as in the unusual and unique.<sup>d</sup> Luke, no doubt, found the mention of an angel in his source: but that need mean no more than that angelic aid was the natural way in which the unexpected release of the Apostles would be described by any pious Jew of that day.

It may be further said that a miraculous interposition would be objectless, since the prisoners were at once rearrested, tried, and scourged. The usual answer to this objection is<sup>e</sup> that the miracle was designed, not to extricate the Apostles from danger, but to encourage their confidence in the Divine care and protection. It will, however, be noticed that at the subsequent trial no reference whatever is made to a miraculous deliverance. The accused do not appeal to it: the Court do not investigate it.<sup>f</sup> And the entire history

<sup>a</sup> Dykes, p. 192.

<sup>b</sup> Reuss, i. 245; Baumgarten, i. 119.

<sup>c</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Ropes, p. 110.

<sup>e</sup> Dykes, p. 194; Alford, *Homilies*, p. 181; L. Merivale, p. 68; Baumgarten, i.

121, 127.

<sup>f</sup> Zeller, i. 222.



of the Acts shows that the Apostles required no miracle to sustain their belief in the Divine protection. (See on ver. 41.)

**20. of this Life.** It is a good description of the Gospel—of the new life manifest in the Risen Jesus and in His followers. The resistance of the Sadducees was to be met in its very central point.

**21. the council and all the senate.** Probably merely a tautological expression. In 2 Maccabees the Sanhedrin is invariably called by the Greek word here translated 'senate'.

**28. strictly charged.** The Greek is a literal rendering of an Aramaic idiom; and this shows that Luke had before him some authority for this speech.

**this name.** The high priest did not consider it compatible with his dignity to name Jesus. It is 'this name', and 'this man's blood'.

**have filled Jerusalem.** A significant admission. The preachers of the Gospel receive a testimonial from their enemies.

**to bring this man's blood upon us.** Once they had cried to Pilate, 'His blood be on us and on our children' (Matt. xxvii. 25). But it would be a mistake to read too solemn a meaning into their words here. They may betray an uneasy conscience, but their primary meaning is that the Apostles intended to bring, not vengeance from God upon them, but vengeance from the people. The Sadducean aristocracy were no favourites with the populace, and there was a real danger to them in the popularity of Jesus' disciples, if they were to demand vengeance for His death.

**29. We must obey God.** The words contain a noble assertion of the liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment. They are in no conflict with the principle laid down in 1 Pet. ii. 13, 'Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.' Civil rulers have a claim to be obeyed when that which they enjoin is within the sphere of civil government; but not when what they order is opposed to the will of God and is within a sphere to which their jurisdiction does not extend. (See on iv. 20.)<sup>a</sup>

**30. raised up.** The reference is to the Incarnation, as the Greek word shows, and not to the Resurrection.

**on a tree.** The word is characteristic of Peter (x. 39, 1 Pet. ii. 24), and so is a mark of authenticity. The only other passage where it occurs in the New Testament is in a quotation by St. Paul (Gal. iii. 13).

<sup>a</sup> Taylor, *Peter*, p. 221.

**31. remission of sins.** Here connected with the exaltation, not with the death, of Jesus. The Apostles had not yet realized that His death, the great offering for sin, superseded the sacrifices of the old Covenant. Their insight into truth was progressive. The communication of the Spirit at Pentecost was not a magical bestowal of all knowledge, but the implanting of the living principle of truth, which was to work out its results according to the laws of the human mind.<sup>a</sup>

**32. and so is the Holy Spirit.** There is a quiet sublimity in this coupling of themselves with the Holy Spirit as witnesses.<sup>b</sup> They may have remembered Jesus' words (John xv. 26, 27), 'the Spirit shall bear witness of me; and ye also shall bear witness.'

## 33-42

<sup>33</sup> But they, when they heard this, were rent with anger, and were minded to put them to death. <sup>34</sup> But there stood up one in the Council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, held in honour by all the people, and commanded to put the men forth a little while. <sup>35</sup> And he said to them, Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves as touching these men what ye are about to do. <sup>36</sup> For before these days rose up Theudas, giving himself out to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves; who was slain; and all, as many as listened to him, were dispersed and came to nought. <sup>37</sup> After him rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the enrolment, and drew away people after him: he also perished; and all, as many as listened to him, were scattered abroad. <sup>38</sup> And now I say to you, Refrain from these men and let them alone—for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: <sup>39</sup> but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow it—lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God. <sup>40</sup> And to him they agreed: and when they had called the Apostles, they beat them, and

<sup>a</sup> Watson, p. 61; Schaff, i. 258; Goulburn, p. 231.

<sup>b</sup> Stiffler, p. 53.

charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. <sup>41</sup> They therefore departed from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name. <sup>42</sup> And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to declare the glad tidings of Jesus the Christ.

**33. to put them to death.** On the previous occasion, when Peter and John were before the Council, the point to be determined was a theological one—whether the cure of the cripple was due to demoniac power (iv. 7); and the penalty on conviction was death by stoning. The Council had, however, shirked a decision on that point, but had forbidden them to continue teaching (iv. 8). Now the charge was disobedience of that prohibition (ver. 18), which could not possibly be a capital offence. But, blinded by their rage, they were on the point of committing a grave judicial blunder.<sup>a</sup>

Strictly speaking, the Jews under the Roman government had no power of life and death. It is sometimes said that the disability mentioned in John xviii. 31—‘For us it is not lawful to put any man to death’—applied only to the Feast day. But in that case they would have kept Jesus in custody till the conclusion of the Feast, and then carried out the sentence. If they had possessed the legal power of execution, they would not have imperilled it by an appeal to the Roman Governor for his co-operation. Moreover, the high priest Annas was deposed by the Procurator in A. D. 14 for carrying out capital sentences. And the Talmud says that the Romans took away the power of execution forty years before the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>b</sup>

On the other hand, the statement here is precise, and Luke is very accurate in such details. The explanation may lie in referring both this trial and the execution of Stephen to A. D. 37, when Vitellius sought to gain the support of the Jews during his expedition against Aretas by giving them a much freer hand than they had enjoyed under Pilate’s stern rule.<sup>c</sup>

**34. Gamaliel.** Luke must have had authority for the substance, at any rate, of this speech, since no forger would have put it into the mouth of the teacher of Saul the persecutor.<sup>d</sup> It is possible

<sup>a</sup> Dykes, p. 197.

<sup>b</sup> Buss, p. 183 seq.

<sup>c</sup> Rendall, *Acts*, p. 18 seq.

<sup>d</sup> Baumgarten, i. 125.

that Saul was himself present at its delivery, and was Luke's informant.

Gamaliel may have been one of the doctors in the midst of whom the boy Jesus had sat, hearing and asking questions (Luke ii. 47). Some have thought that he believed in His Messiahship, but dared not openly avow his opinion. There is, however, no trace of this. His attitude is that of a wise, cool-headed man—one who believed that a temporizing policy would accomplish the desired end better than oppression.<sup>a</sup> At the same time, his opposition as a Pharisee to the ruling party may have inclined him to look with more indulgence on the Christians. The latter had not yet begun to speak of the abrogation of the Mosaic law. It was the teaching of Stephen which led Gamaliel's pupil to adopt a course so inconsistent with his master's advice.<sup>b</sup>

**36. before these days.** The parallel cases which he proceeds to quote show that he regarded Christianity rather as a political agitation than as a religious movement. He points out how other pretenders had arisen, trading on the current Messianic expectation, and had all been destroyed without any action on the part of the Sanhedrin.<sup>c</sup>

**Theudas.** Luke puts into the mouth of Gamaliel in the year (*circa*) A. D. 37 a reference to a revolt which, according to Josephus (*Antiq.* xx. 5. 1), occurred in A. D. 46. It would be a strange coincidence if two men of the same name, and that not a very common one, were leaders of insurrection within a short period of time. Moreover, we have a repetition, not only of the name, but of the whole occurrence. Both pretend to be prophets, and both are overtaken by the same doom. The only point of difference is in the number of their adherents. The agreement is too striking to allow us to believe that different episodes are referred to. There is no reason for doubting the accuracy of Josephus' chronology at this point; and the remarkable accuracy of Luke's historical narrative is no sufficient ground for denying the possibility of inaccuracy in a speech composed, at least to some extent, by himself. It is unlikely that he could have obtained so full a report of the proceedings before the Sanhedrin as to be able to give the exact words of Gamaliel's speech. If he knew that historical parallels were quoted, he may have supplied one of the illustrations wrongly, and yet have

<sup>a</sup> L. Merivale, p. 70; McGiffert, p. 84.

<sup>b</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 32.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, i. 198; Stokes, ii. 235; L. Merivale, p. 71.

given faithfully the general purport of the speech. Such a mistake in no way impairs the general credibility of the Acts.<sup>a</sup>

37. **of Galilee.** Josephus usually calls Judas a Galilaean, but in one passage he calls him a Gaulonite, from Gamala, which lay east of Galilee. This may be correct, and the title 'of Galilee' may have been given him because the insurrection broke out in Galilee.<sup>b</sup>

**the enrolment.** This was the census taken by Quirinius in A. D. 6. As it was intended to be the basis of Roman taxation, it roused fierce opposition on the part of the Jews, and gave rise to the fanatic sect of the 'Zealots'.

38. **Refrain, &c.** The utterance is that of a man who wanted to find an excuse for temporizing, rather than that of an earnest inquirer after truth. As a broad law characterizing the Divine government, his statement holds good. The survival of the fittest is a fundamental fact in the moral, as well as in the physical, world. But immediate success is no criterion of truth. Success in the long run is; but in the beginning the right more often lies with minorities.<sup>c</sup>

40. **to him they agreed.** But only partially. They 'refrain' from putting the Apostles to death; but so far from 'letting them alone', they scourge them, as a punishment for their disobedience, and repeat their futile prohibition against preaching.

41. **rejoicing.** Doubtless they remembered their Lord's beatitude (Matt. v. 11, 12). To be inspired to meet shame and pain thus was a more wonderful thing than to have their prison bolts withdrawn by an angel's hand.<sup>d</sup>

## CHAPTER VI

### I-7

<sup>1</sup> But in those days, as the disciples multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews, that their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. <sup>2</sup> And the Twelve called the company of

<sup>a</sup> Chase, p. 297 seq.; Zeller, i. 222; McGiffert, p. 84; Simcox, p. 43; A. C. Headlam, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Theudas.

<sup>b</sup> G. T. Purves, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Judas of Galilee.

<sup>c</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 225; Burrell, p. 82; Maclaren, i. 201.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 201.



the disciples to them and said, It is not fitting that we should forsake the word of God to minister at tables. <sup>3</sup> Wherefore, brethren, look ye out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, and we will appoint them to be over this business. <sup>4</sup> But, as for us, we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministration of the word. <sup>5</sup> And the saying pleased the whole company : and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch : <sup>6</sup> whom they set before the Apostles ; and they prayed and laid their hands on them. <sup>7</sup> And the word of God continued to spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied exceedingly ; and a great crowd of the priests were obedient to the faith.

1. **Hellenists.** These were Jews who were either resident abroad or had, after living abroad, settled in Palestine. The Hebrew, or Palestinian Jew, looked down, with the pride of a purer patriotism and of a stricter observance of the Law, upon those of his race who had adopted the language and manners of the Greeks. The Hellenist, with a wider range of ideas and a larger appreciation of Gentile civilization, met the pride of the Hebrew with the countercharge of narrowness and bigotry.<sup>a</sup> The difference of language intensified their mutual dislike. Aramaic was the sacred tongue of Palestine. Though not the language of Moses and David, it was that of Ezra and Nehemiah ; while Greek was the language of idolaters.<sup>b</sup> We see the disfavour with which the Hebrews viewed the Greek language from the way in which the fury of the mob, who thought that they had to do with a Hellenist, was at once quieted when Paul began to address them in Aramaic (xxii. 2).<sup>c</sup> We have no means of knowing what proportion the Hellenists bore to the Hebrews in the Christian Church, but their influence would be out of proportion to their numbers. They were, on the average, men of higher intelligence and energy, and were not likely to acquiesce in any neglect which they might

<sup>a</sup> Shirley, p. 16.

<sup>b</sup> Conybeare and Howson, i. 34.

<sup>c</sup> Hausrath, ii. 157.

suffer at the hands of the majority. Whether they had a real, or only a fancied, ground of complaint is immaterial. The complaint was a symptom of deeper elements of severance.<sup>a</sup>

**a murmuring.** It is startling to find the spirit of jealousy and discontent breaking out in a Society where the feeling of brotherhood had been so strong that no man 'said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own' (iv. 32); and to discover that a religion, destined to abolish national distinctions between Jew and Gentile, could fail to draw together divergent members of the same race. While the community was small, and during the fervour of its first enthusiasm, the peace and harmony lasted: but, as it expanded, old grudges returned. In the ordinary life of the city, the Hellenists kept to themselves and worshipped in their own synagogues: in the Christian Church the daily contact with the Hebrews brought out the latent antagonism.<sup>b</sup>

It is, however, well for us to know that the early Church was composed of men of the same flesh and blood as ourselves. The first Christians lived in no rarified atmosphere. They were exposed to the same temptations as other men, and retained their old inclinations to be selfish, false, and contentious. What they had learnt was that these inclinations need not be indulged; that there was a new Power to which they might appeal, to enable them to resist them.<sup>c</sup>

**their widows.** The daily ministration was to all needy Christians (iv. 35), the widows only being mentioned because in their case a difficulty arose. In the seclusion to which Oriental custom condemned women, the lot of a widow, with none to plead her cause, might be very bitter.<sup>d</sup>

There is no necessity to assume intentional unfairness: but since the earliest Christians were almost exclusively Hebrews, the almoners were probably all Hebrews, who found it easier to discover the poor living in their own quarters of the city and speaking their own language. On the other hand, the Hellenist widows may have been numerous, since they would be likely, when their homes abroad were broken up by the death of the husband, to return to end their days in the Holy City.<sup>e</sup> In the treatment of widows as a separate class the Church followed the synagogue. The First Epistle to Timothy (v. 4-10) implies the systematic classification of widows at Ephesus; and the fact that the instructions about them are inserted into a

<sup>a</sup> Dykes, p. 211; Lechler, i. 113.

<sup>b</sup> Dobschütz, p. 147.

<sup>c</sup> Maurice, p. 73 seq.

<sup>d</sup> Purves, p. 38; Farrar, i. 131.

<sup>e</sup> Fouard, *Peter*, p. 59; Simcox, p. 23.

passage about elders suggests that they were required to render some services in exchange for maintenance.<sup>a</sup>

**2. the company of the disciples.** This must mean a representative body of some kind, since the numbers were now far too great to meet in any one place.<sup>b</sup>

**and said.** The Apostles admit the grievance and take steps to remedy it. It is clear that they had not been themselves responsible for the distribution of alms, since the murmuring was not against them but against the Hebrews, and they say at once that they cannot be expected to undertake it. The almoners had probably been certain of the elders—officials, whose existence at Jerusalem Luke mentions later, as a matter of course (xi. 30), and whom Paul, also as a matter of course, appointed in all the Churches which he founded.<sup>c</sup> (The fact that elders were no new institution, but an inheritance from the organization of the synagogue, explains Luke's silence about their appointment.) The change now made consisted, not in the transference to the Seven of the work previously done by others, but in the appointment of seven Hellenist almoners in addition to the existing Hebrew ones. This is shown by their names (ver. 5). That they came to be known as 'The Seven' (xxi. 8) was probably due to the exceptional prominence, as regards both character and ability, of the Hellenists selected. Luke, it may be, records their appointment, not in order to give information about the organization of the early Church, but only as an introduction to the history of Stephen.<sup>d</sup>

**minister at tables.** Whatever the expression means—whether the assistance was given in money or in food—it means secular work. And it is just as 'unfitting' now, as it was then, that those who are called to the ministry of the word should 'forsake' their spiritual work in order to attend to secular matters.

**3. look ye out.** While the Apostles reserved to themselves the formal appointment of the new almoners, they wisely left the choice to the whole body, since it was essential that those elected should possess public confidence. For this reason too much stress must not be laid on the method here employed.

**seven men.** That 'the Seven' are not to be identified with the 'deacons' of a later date (Phil. i. 1) seems to be clear. There is no indication that the Apostles were establishing a permanent order, and the word 'deacon' occurs nowhere in the Acts. There is a tempta-

<sup>a</sup> Ragg, p. 249.

<sup>b</sup> Row, p. 62.

<sup>c</sup> Norris, p. 144.

<sup>d</sup> Olshausen, p. 429.

tion to import into early days the well-defined organization of later times ; whereas, the further we go back in the history of the Church, the more indefinite appear to be all ecclesiastical offices. 'The Seven' were appointed for a special purpose, and we hear no more of them after their occupation was taken away by the dispersion which followed Stephen's death. When alms were sent by the disciples at Antioch for the relief of the poor in Judaea, they were sent to the elders (xi. 30) ; whereas if the Seven had still existed as a body, we should expect them to have been mentioned.

**full of the Spirit.** Their duties were connected with the relief of the poor and required practical ability and good judgment—what is here called 'wisdom'. But spiritual gifts were also needed. The almoners must be able to reflect the mind of Christ in their treatment of His poor. The early Church did not regard even its secular work as unspiritual. The new office and its duties were lifted up out of the atmosphere of mere business into that of worship.<sup>a</sup>

**5. they chose.** The inference from the names that all were Hellenists is not certain, since of the Twelve, who were all Hebrews, two, Philip and Andrew, bore Greek names. But the fact that certain Greeks, who wished for an interview with Jesus (John xii. 20 seq.), applied to those two Apostles for an introduction looks as though they had some family connexion with Greeks. Hence it is probable that the Seven, if not all Hellenists, were all men who had special relations with the Hellenists.<sup>b</sup>

Thus the result of their appointment was to give an official position to those members of the Church who represented its more catholic spirit. It is significant that two of them, Stephen and Philip, became, the one a preacher of views far broader than those held by the Apostles, the other an enthusiastic missionary. It seems clear that the great questions of the relation of Christianity to the Law on the one hand, and to the Gentile world on the other, were coming to the front.<sup>c</sup>

**a proselyte.** This is the first mention of a circumcised Gentile as a member of the Church. The interest, which this early recognition that the Church was wider than the Jewish race would have for the Gentile Luke, may account for his insertion of the word. Further, he may have been personally known to Luke, who had, it is clear, some special connexion with Antioch (see on xvi. 10). The selection

<sup>a</sup> Swete, p. 114 ; Dykes, p. 216.

<sup>b</sup> Arnot, p. 152 ; Alford, *Homilies*, p. 201.

<sup>c</sup> Dykes, p. 218 seq. ; Balmforth, p. 127.

of a proselyte shows that the Church at Jerusalem was at this date less in bondage to Jewish prejudices than at a later time. Indeed, it may imply<sup>a</sup> that many proselytes had joined the Church, and that Nicolas had the duty of looking after their needs.

**of Antioch.** The fact that the native of Antioch is the only one of the Seven whose place of origin is given makes it likely that the source of this narrative is Antiochean.<sup>b</sup>

**6. laid their hands.** There is no indication that this act was what we call 'ordination'. Rather it was a solemn blessing upon their entry on office.

**7. the word of God continued to spread.** This summary looks like an irrelevant interpolation into the original source. It interrupts the narrative, since the increase of the Church has nothing to do with what precedes, nor the conversion of priests with what follows.<sup>c</sup>

**of the priests.** The statement is startling, but there is no reason for questioning its accuracy. They were doubtless poor, ill-paid priests from the ranks of the people, in contrast to the wealthy families who monopolized the higher offices.<sup>d</sup> There is no hint that they regarded their functions as obsolete or ceased to minister in the Temple. They had come to recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah foretold in the Scriptures, and they looked for His speedy return to fulfil all things; but nothing was to be changed till then. Not one jot or one tittle was to pass from the Law. Hence they would be shocked by the teaching of Stephen. The breach between Christianity and Judaism was still to come.<sup>e</sup>

## 8-15

<sup>8</sup> Now Stephen, full of grace and power, was working wonders and great miracles among the people. <sup>9</sup> But there rose up certain of the synagogue which is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and men of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. <sup>10</sup> And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake. <sup>11</sup> Then they suborned men who said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Pictures*, p. 44.

<sup>c</sup> J. Moffatt, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 1787.

<sup>e</sup> Simcox, p. 4; Johnston, p. 27.

<sup>b</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 170.

<sup>d</sup> Rendall, *Acts*.



<sup>12</sup> And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and came upon him and seized him, and brought him before the Council, <sup>13</sup> and set up false witnesses who said, This man is ever speaking words against this holy place and the Law : <sup>14</sup> for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us. <sup>15</sup> And all that sat in the Council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

8. **Stephen.** We know nothing of his antecedents, except that he was a Hellenist: we have the story of but one day in his life, the last: yet there is no man in the New Testament of whom we are told so much without one blemish being revealed. A John might wish to call down fire upon his enemies, a Peter deny his Lord, a Thomas doubt, a Saul persecute: Stephen's character is summed up in the words 'a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit'.

He must have been already prominent in the Church to have been chosen one of the Seven. But, as often happens, official position called out his energies and developed his powers. Appointed to be an almoner, he soon showed himself to be something more and greater—the first member of the Church to grasp the full meaning of the Gospel, to understand that Christianity was to supersede Judaism, and to see with clear eyes the coming of a time when Jerusalem should no longer be the religious capital of the world, or the Temple the one centre of the worship of God. Humanly speaking, it was his teaching, and the antagonism which it provoked, that saved the Church from becoming merely another Jewish sect.<sup>a</sup>

9. **But there rose up certain.** It must be borne in mind that under the common name of Hellenists were included men of two very divergent types. Foreign residence acts in two ways. It narrows some natures and broadens others; makes some more devotedly attached to their old country, emancipates others from national prejudices. Thus, while the Jew of Palestine shrank from the defiling touch of heathenism and built higher the wall of separation, becoming ever more proud, more bitter, more narrow, the foreign Jew often grew more liberal and cosmopolitan. He abandoned Aramaic for

<sup>a</sup> Shirley, p. 17 seq.; Pfeiderer, *Hibbert*, p. 28.

the Greek language, came under the influence of Greek thought and culture, and learnt to appreciate God's wider purposes in history. His religion became a faith rather than a ritual. Unable to worship in the Temple, he magnified the synagogue and welcomed to its services all who cared to come. Hellenists of this type—Jews by birth and Greeks by training, Hebrews in their acknowledgement of Jehovah, and Gentiles in their habits of thought—formed a bridge of communication between the Eastern world in which Christianity was cradled and the Western world where its manhood was to grow to strength.<sup>a</sup>

But while the wider horizon and the intercourse with Gentiles made many Hellenists more tolerant than the Hebrews, the effect on others was very different. They entertained the same prejudices, and observed the same isolation, as the Jews of Palestine: stood outside all the social, political, and intellectual life of their adopted country; and, deeply attached to the traditions of their fathers, looked with suspicion on their more speculative brethren. Hellenists of this type paid their annual visit to Jerusalem as pilgrims to the Feasts: and, as soon as circumstances permitted, returned to make their home there. Hence the average Hellenist in Jerusalem was no less bigoted and fanatical than the native Hebrew. Rather, he was eager to atone for his foreign taint by uncommon zeal. This is the explanation of the fact that it was Hellenists who persecuted Stephen, just as it was the Hellenist Saul who persecuted the Church, the Hellenists of Jerusalem who sought to kill Paul after his conversion (ix. 29), and Hellenists from Asia who sought to slay him later (xxi. 27).<sup>b</sup>

**the Synagogue.** The Apostles preached in the Temple cloisters, and not, so far as we know, to unwilling hearers in the synagogues.<sup>c</sup> But Stephen, whose duties as almoner would bring him into daily contact with Hellenist Christians and through them with other Hellenists, appears to have aimed at the conversion of the latter, and with this object to have taught in their synagogues.

**the Freedmen.** The Greek word, if the text is sound, can only mean this. But we should expect a word denoting the inhabitants of some town or country. Some Armenian versions read 'Libyans', which might describe the Greek towns to the west of Cyrene.<sup>d</sup> Taking the text as it stands, it is not clear whether the members of five synagogues

<sup>a</sup> F. B. Meyer, p. 38; Dykes, p. 211; Goulburn, p. 6.

<sup>b</sup> McGiffert, p. 77; Baring Gould, p. 49; Geikie, p. 61; Purves, p. 51; Sabatier, p. 40; Hausrath, ii. 161.

<sup>c</sup> Baring-Gould, p. 121.

<sup>d</sup> *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 2793.

are meant—Roman freedmen, Cyrenian, Alexandrian, Cilician, and Asian: or of three—European, African, and Asian: or of one—freedmen of Africa and Asia. Nor is it material to decide. It is of more interest to remember that among the ‘men of Cilicia’ was Saul of Tarsus, a man, so closely akin to Stephen in heart, as the future was to show, though now so far divided from him,<sup>a</sup> who, if present, was certain, with his ardent spirit, his intellectual ability, and his dialectical skill, to have taken a prominent part in the debates.

**10. not able to withstand.** Luke seems in these words to be glancing back to the promise which he alone of the Evangelists records (Luke xxi. 15), ‘I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay.’<sup>b</sup> Stephen was the first to use the weapon of argument and debate in the cause of the Gospel. The Apostles were ‘witnesses’, and preached by bearing witness. They stated their doctrine. He defended it, parrying the blow and pushing the attack.<sup>c</sup>

**11. suborned men.** Foiled in argument, they grasped at other weapons.

**blasphemous words.** The penalty for which was death by stoning.

**against Moses.** No such complaint had been made of the previous teachers. They had charged the Jewish people and their rulers with the rejection and murder of Jesus, whose Messiahship was proved by His Resurrection and Ascension. But they had been regular frequenters of the Temple, and had said no word about the abrogation of the Mosaic system.<sup>d</sup>

**12. stirred up the people.** There was no need, as before at the arrest of Peter and John, to avoid all semblance of violence from fear of the people. The popular favour was alienated by the first rumour of defective patriotism,<sup>e</sup> added to which the offender was one of the unpopular Hellenists. Hence the Pharisees, who had hitherto been lukewarm in their opposition, no sooner found the same tendencies which they had dreaded in the teaching of Jesus showing themselves among His followers, than they were as ready to take the lead in persecuting Stephen as they had been in regard to Christ.<sup>f</sup>

**before the Council.** Harnack thinks<sup>g</sup> that Luke has wrongly placed the scene in the Council chamber; that Stephen was the

<sup>a</sup> F. B. Meyer, p. 40.

<sup>c</sup> Fouard, *Peter*, p. 65.

<sup>e</sup> Farrar, i. 153.

<sup>g</sup> Acts, pp. 220, 246.

<sup>b</sup> Goulburn, p. 43.

<sup>d</sup> Kitto, p. 57.

<sup>f</sup> J. Robertson, p. 31.

victim of a riotous mob in the Temple; and that the real circumstances can be discerned in the 'this place' of verses 13 and 14, and in the tumultuous scene of vii. 54 seq.

13. **false witnesses.** No doubt they distorted his words, just as the witnesses at the trial of Jesus had distorted similar words of His (Mark xiv. 58); but there must have been some ground for the charge, since nothing similar had previously been urged against the preachers of the Gospel. Indeed, Stephen in his defence does not repel the charge as wholly false.<sup>a</sup> It is clear that he had definitely raised an issue not previously discussed—the bearing of the new faith on the old system of Moses. The teaching of the Apostles had gained a favourable hearing, just because the new faith did not profess to be more than the completion of the old. Stephen was the first to grasp the progressive character of revelation, and to teach that the Gospel was a Divine step forward—a new Economy of God, which the Mosaic institutions might refuse to accept, but which would in that case not only dispense with them, but in the end overthrow them.<sup>b</sup>

14. **heard him say.** The fact that tradition preserved, in almost identical words, the accusation against both Jesus and Stephen is clear evidence of the close connexion between their teaching.<sup>c</sup> Stephen may have remembered such sayings of Jesus with regard to the Temple, as that not one stone should be left upon another (Matt. xxiv. 2); that He would destroy the old Temple and build a new one (John ii. 19); that the hour was coming when men would no longer worship the Father in Jerusalem (John iv. 21); and, with regard to the Law, such pregnant and far-reaching words as that new wine could not be put into old wine skins (Matt. ix. 17). The Hellenist Stephen, who had learnt from experience that truth and honour and piety were no Jewish monopoly, was much less likely than the Palestinian Jew to confound what was eternal with what was temporal in his national religion.<sup>d</sup> Living far from the Temple, and worshipping the God of Israel without bloody sacrifices, he was prepared to understand words of Jesus, many of which remained veiled even to the Apostles.<sup>e</sup> But to teach publicly that the observance of ritual ceremonies was unessential as compared with purity of heart and holiness of life, though it was only what the prophets of old had taught before him, was to doom him to the fate of his Master. To have used words which could even be twisted into the assertion that the Temple was to

<sup>a</sup> Neander, p. 51; J. Robertson, p. 31.

<sup>b</sup> Dykes, p. 233 seq.; Reuss, i. 256 seq.

<sup>c</sup> Pfleiderer, *Hibbert*, p. 30.

<sup>d</sup> J. Robertson, p. 28.

<sup>e</sup> Fouard, *Peter*, p. 63.

be destroyed and the customs of Moses changed was shocking to men who believed that Jerusalem was to be the capital of Messiah's kingdom, the Temple the centre of the world's worship, and the Mosaic institutions of authority and sanctity for all time.<sup>a</sup>

**15. the face of an angel.** Whether Stephen's teaching had startled his fellow-Christians as well as the unbelieving Jews, we cannot say. Certainly, throughout the narrative, we read of none who came forward to offer sympathy and counsel. He seems, like his Lord, to have stood at his trial alone, with no friendly countenance on which his eyes could rest. Yet not alone, because his Lord was with him. And men, looking on him, saw his face transfigured. Commentators say that it was a supernatural glory. It is more helpful to ourselves to think that it was the natural effect of inward peace and victorious faith and blessed hope, which so lifted him above the world that the light of heaven seemed to shine in his face. God had not forsaken His servant. The radiant countenance was but the outward index of a soul glad and fearless, 'as seeing Him who is invisible.' If it was a miracle, it was such a miracle as is still seen among us. Have we not all known Christian men of whom the words might be used?—men, like Stephen, 'full of faith and of the Holy Spirit'—whose faces tell of a heart at peace with God and of a hope full of immortality?

## CHAPTER VII

**THE SPEECH OF STEPHEN.** The absence of obvious connexion between the speech and the occasion out of which it rose is a proof of its authenticity. The historian, if it had been solely his composition, would have made it a more direct answer to the charges brought against Stephen. Moreover, the Old Testament story is supplemented by Jewish traditions which must have been unfamiliar to a Gentile writer. Further, the style is less Lukan than in other speeches in the Acts, and the Greek diction is inferior.<sup>b</sup> Hence it is probable that at least the spirit and general argument are Stephen's. Though a report taken on the spot is out of the question, the speech would, from its historical treatment and chronological order be easily recalled; and the martyrdom of the speaker, and its consequences to the early Church, would lead the Christians to remember and hand down his words.<sup>c</sup> What Luke gives is probably a summary as recollected in

<sup>a</sup> Dick, p. 114.

<sup>b</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*; Simcox, p. 44; Gardner, p. 397.

<sup>c</sup> Lange, *Acts*.



after years by St. Paul, supplemented perhaps by a version from Philip.<sup>a</sup> How deep and indelible an impression the speech made on St. Paul's mind is shown by the many coincidences between it and passages in his own speeches and letters. Years after at Pisidian Antioch (xiii. 16 seq.) he adopted the same historical method; and at Athens he quotes the same scripture with the same application (cf. xvii. 24 with ver. 48). The coincidences in the letters are even more striking. Rom. ii. 29 seems to be an echo of ver. 51; Gal. iii. 19 of ver. 53; and 2 Tim. iv. 16 (if that letter is genuine) of ver. 60.<sup>b</sup>

## 1-53

<sup>1</sup> And the high priest said, Are these things so?  
<sup>2</sup> And he said, Brethren and fathers, hearken. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, <sup>3</sup> and said to him, Get thee out from thy land and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. <sup>4</sup> Then went he out of the land of the Chaldaeans and dwelt in Haran: and thence, when his father was dead, God removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell. <sup>5</sup> And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: and he promised that he would give it to him in possession and to his seed after him, at a time when he had no child. <sup>6</sup> And God spake on this wise, that his seed should sojourn in a strange land, where they should be brought into bondage and treated evilly four hundred years. <sup>7</sup> And the nation to which they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth and serve me in this place.

<sup>8</sup> And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac and circumcised him the eighth day: and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. <sup>9</sup> And the patriarchs, moved

<sup>a</sup> Baring Gould, p. 75.

<sup>b</sup> Farrar, i. 163; E. C. S. Gibson, *Expositor*, II. iv. 421.

with jealousy, sold Joseph into Egypt ; and God was with him, <sup>10</sup> and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt ; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. <sup>11</sup> Now there came a famine over all Egypt and Canaan, and great distress ; and our fathers found no provender. <sup>12</sup> But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent forth our fathers a first time. <sup>13</sup> And at the second time Joseph discovered himself to his brethren ; and Joseph's kindred were made known to Pharaoh. <sup>14</sup> And Joseph sent, and called to him Jacob his father and all his kindred, three-score and fifteen souls. <sup>15</sup> And Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, himself and our fathers ; <sup>16</sup> and they were carried over to Shechem, and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a price in silver of the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

<sup>17</sup> But as the time of the promise which God had covenanted with Abraham drew nigh, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, <sup>18</sup> till there arose another king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. <sup>19</sup> He brought low our race by craft, and treated our fathers evilly, in that he cast out their babes, to the end they might not live. <sup>20</sup> At which season Moses was born, and was exceeding fair ; and he was brought up three months in his father's house. <sup>21</sup> And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and reared him to be a son to herself. <sup>22</sup> And Moses was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians ; and he was mighty in his words and works. <sup>23</sup> But when he was nigh forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. <sup>24</sup> And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he retaliated, and avenged him that was being oppressed, smiting the Egyptian. <sup>25</sup> And he supposed

that his brethren understood how that God by his hand was giving them deliverance ; but they understood not. <sup>26</sup> And on the following day he appeared to them as they strove, and would have made peace between them, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren ; why do ye wrong one to another ? <sup>27</sup> But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us ? <sup>28</sup> Wouldest thou kill me, as yesterday thou killedst the Egyptian ? <sup>29</sup> And Moses fled at that saying, and became a sojourner in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons. <sup>30</sup> And when forty years were ended, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai an angel in a flame of fire in a bush. <sup>31</sup> And when Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight : and as he drew near to behold, there came a voice of the Lord, <sup>32</sup> saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. And Moses trembled, and durst not behold. <sup>33</sup> And the Lord said to him, Loose the shoes from thy feet ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. <sup>34</sup> I have surely seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I am sending thee into Egypt. <sup>35</sup> This Moses, whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge ?—him God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. <sup>36</sup> This man brought them out, working wonders and signs in Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. <sup>37</sup> This is the Moses who said to the children of Israel, A prophet shall God raise up to you from among your brethren, as he raised up me. <sup>38</sup> This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel that spake to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers : who

received living utterances to give us : <sup>39</sup> to whom our fathers would not be obedient, but thrust him from them, and turned in their hearts to Egypt, <sup>40</sup> saying to Aaron, Make us gods who shall go before us ; for as for this Moses who led us forth out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. <sup>41</sup> And they made a calf in those days, and brought sacrifices to the idol, and were for rejoicing in the works of their own hands. <sup>42</sup> But God turned, and gave them up to serve the host of heaven ; as it is written in a book of the prophets :—

Did ye offer slain beasts and sacrifices to me  
Forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel ?

<sup>43</sup> And ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch  
And the star of the god Rephan,  
the figures which ye made to worship :  
And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

<sup>44</sup> Our fathers in the wilderness had the tabernacle of the testimony, as he appointed who spake to Moses, that he should make it according to the pattern that he had seen : <sup>45</sup> which also our fathers in the next generation brought in with Joshua, when they entered on the possession of the nations, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David : <sup>46</sup> who found favour in the sight of God, and asked to provide a habitation for the God of Jacob. <sup>47</sup> But Solomon built him a house. <sup>48</sup> Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in buildings made with hands, as saith the prophet :—

<sup>49</sup> The Heaven is my throne, and the earth my  
footstool :

What manner of house will ye build me ? saith the  
Lord ;

or what shall be the place of my rest ?

<sup>50</sup> Did not my hand make all these things ?

<sup>51</sup> Stiffnecked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears,

ye do always set yourselves against the Holy Spirit : as your fathers did, so do ye. <sup>52</sup> Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute ? And they killed them who foretold the coming of the Righteous One ; of whom ye are now become betrayers and murderers ; <sup>53</sup> who received the Law as ordinances of angels, and kept it not.

1. **Are these things so ?** A formal question, answering to our 'Do you plead guilty, or not guilty ?' <sup>a</sup> Stephen could not answer directly either 'yes' or 'no' : not 'yes', for in his eyes the Gospel was the fulfilment of the Law : not 'no', for there was just so much truth in the accusation as would have made an unqualified denial an equivocation. He must explain ; and what better explanation could he offer than to display at large the scheme of God's dealings with His people ? <sup>b</sup> At first sight, he seems to be giving no answer to the charges against him. And, indeed, his aim was to vindicate the truth rather than himself : to testify rather than to defend. But when we look below the surface, we see that he is defending his teaching under the veil of a historical review. His defence is a new reading of the national history. Here, again, he appears at first sight to be merely sketching the leading incidents of that history ; but really he is making history do the work of argument. Just as the prophecies of the Old Testament had been illuminated to Peter by Christianity, so Stephen read the history of the Old Testament with new eyes in the light of the life and death of Jesus. The history of the Hebrews is shown to be a process of Divine education, of which Christianity was the intended goal. <sup>c</sup>

2. **And he said.** There are two distinct, yet parallel, lines of argument which run through the speech :—

(1) That the limitation of worship to a single locality was no essential thing, but had been late in origin and temporary in purpose. <sup>d</sup>

He begins with Abraham (verses 2-8). The call of God was sent to the founder of their race, not in Palestine, but in Mesopotamia. When he did come to Palestine, he had no inheritance in it. And his seed, though they were the chosen people, were for centuries slaves in a foreign land.

<sup>a</sup> Farrar, i. 156.

<sup>b</sup> Sabatier, p. 42 ; L. Merivale, p. 81.

<sup>c</sup> J. C. Jones, p. 151 ; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 13 ; Purves, p. 52 ; Iverach, p. 9 ; Dykes, p. 237 seq.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 238.



He passes to Joseph (verses 9-16). It was to Egypt that God's overruling providence carried him, when sold by his brethren; and his family sought refuge there from Palestine.

He passes to Moses (verses 17-43). The great Lawgiver was born in Egypt. And when he was driven into exile, it was in the wilderness that God called him, declaring the place to be holy ground.

He passes to the Temple (verses 44-50). The Tabernacle, the germ of the Temple, was in the wilderness. There was no Temple in Moses' day, none in David's, much as he desired it. And when at last Solomon built it, the spirituality of God and of His worship was solemnly affirmed at the very moment of its consecration.

(2) That at every crisis in their history Israel had mistaken the leading of God, and rejected those whom He sent to save them. Ever since He had chosen them for His people they had been a rebellious people.

It was so with Joseph. His brethren sold him to the foreigner (ver. 9). It was so with Moses. As individuals, and as a nation, they rejected him (verses 27, 39). And when God gave them the Temple, that blessing produced no better result than previous blessings. Their carnal temper turned it to a curse. They made external worship a substitute for spiritual obedience.

**51. Stiffnecked.** Throughout the speech there had run the thought that God's revelation to His people was progressive. From the beginning, and through the ages, was a gradual development, one blessing growing out of another, and all pointing to something yet better and nobler in the future. While the Jews in their blindness thought that the end had been reached in the Law and in the Temple, and expected the Messiah merely to restore what had been, Stephen had read the history of his nation with other eyes. Under all the changes he had learnt to trace a Divine progress, a slow, but blessed, unfolding of the gracious thoughts of God towards some still unaccomplished end. And as he saw his countrymen repeating the old mistake—clinging to the present and the material, while God was calling them to higher spiritual levels—and still, as ever, resisting the Holy Spirit, treating the Messiah as the patriarchs had treated Joseph, and the Hebrews Moses—the pity of it overwhelmed him, and his mingled grief and indignation broke out in words of fire, such as burned of old on the lips of the prophets.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 15; Stifler, p. 61; Dykes, p. 236 seq.

In one sense only is it true that at this point his speech was interrupted. His audience at last perceived the point to which his argument was tending. The accused was arraigning his judges. They, not he, were the blasphemers—had been from ancient times the blasphemers—of Moses, of the Law, of the Holy Place, of God Himself. And as they realized this, their fury broke all bounds. But in another sense there was no interruption. Stephen had said all that he meant to say. He had spoken of the fathers; he was speaking to the sons. Before his voice was silenced for ever, he would sum up the teaching of their history in one comprehensive sentence of stern denunciation.

**uncircumcised.** No epithet could have been more galling and abhorrent to his audience.

**52. Which of the prophets.** He echoes the Lord's words (Matt. v. 12).

**53. as ordinances of angels.** The origin of the tradition connecting the giving of the Law with angels is probably to be found in the convulsion of the elements which was thought to have attended its delivery on Sinai. This will be seen if Hebrews xii. 18, where 'blackness and darkness and tempest' are dwelt upon as the accompaniments, be compared with the words of Psalm civ. 4, 'who makest his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.'<sup>a</sup>

There are several passages in the speech (e.g. verses 4, 7, 16, 43) where Stephen either makes misstatements, or quotes inaccurately, or follows traditions inconsistent with the Hebrew Scriptures. He had apparently been trained in the spirit of that Alexandrian Judaism which, for all its reverence, sat wonderfully free from the letter of the Old Testament.<sup>b</sup> Only those who make claims for the Bible which it never makes for itself will be troubled by such small matters. Inspiration is not dictation by the Spirit. Stephen spoke in the fulness of the Spirit; but that fact did not make him a different man intellectually, or divest him of his education, training, and associations. Sketching the history in broad outlines, he was careless of exact chronology or verbal accuracy. His argument was in no way affected by superficial errors in statements which were essentially and spiritually true.

Stephen has sometimes been called 'the forerunner of Paul'. But there is not much in the speech to show that he had grasped that the Jewish system was to prepare the way for a wider Church,

<sup>a</sup> L. Merivale, p. 85.

<sup>b</sup> J. Moffatt, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 4791.

where all men would be equal in the sight of God. He nowhere suggests the call of the Gentiles. He regards Christianity as the natural development of the Divine purpose for Israel. Though his argument that God's election of Abraham was prior to and independent of the Law furnishes the key-note of the theology which we associate with St. Paul, Stephen nowhere asserts, as Paul did, the provisional character of the Law. He accepts the Jewish valuation of it. He calls it 'living utterances' (ver. 38), the Divine character of which was attested by its connexion with angels (ver. 53). His contention is that it was the Jews, and not he, who were really its violators.<sup>a</sup>

## CHAPTER VIII

vii. 54 - viii. 4

<sup>54</sup> Now as they heard these things, they were rent with anger, and gnashed their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup> But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, <sup>56</sup> and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. <sup>57</sup> But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord; <sup>58</sup> and they cast him out of the city and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man, named Saul. <sup>59</sup> And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. <sup>60</sup> And sinking on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. viii. <sup>1</sup> And Saul was approving of his death.

And there broke out on that day a great persecution against the Church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 86; A. Grieve, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Stephen; Simcox, p. 30; J. Moffatt, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 4797.

Judæa and Samaria, except the Apostles. <sup>2</sup>And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. <sup>3</sup>But Saul ravaged the Church, entering house after house, and dragging forth men and women committed them to prison. <sup>4</sup>They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the glad tidings of the word.

55. **But he.** He knew what was coming. That fierce gnashing of the teeth meant death. And so he was full of—what? of fear? of indignation at the injustice meted to him? No: he was ‘full of the Holy Spirit’. That is how he is described (vi. 8), when he was chosen to be an Almoner. It was not for the first time, when death was near, that he knew the comfort of the Spirit.<sup>a</sup> He ceased from rebuke, which brought no penitence, but only rage. The faith, which had before transfigured his face (vi. 15), now pierced the veil of matter; and the cruel crowd of enemies melted away. He saw the glory of God, and standing at the right hand of God—standing to welcome him with open arms—Him in whose cause he was about to die. It was no empty phantom of the brain. It cannot be that the dying martyr was granted a vision of something that was not real. He saw Jesus—the Jesus whom Saul was to see on the road to Damascus: and his instant recognition of His person—so unlike Saul’s ‘Sir, who art thou?’ (ix. 5)—and his description of Him as ‘the Righteous One’ (ver. 52), make it likely that he had known Him during His life on earth; while his use of the title ‘Son of man’, employed by Jesus some years earlier before the same Council (Matt. xxvi. 64), and his echo of the Lord’s prayer for His murderers and of His commendation of His spirit to God, render it almost certain that he had seen Him die.

57. **stopped their ears.** It was counted blasphemy in him, as it had been in his Master’s case (Matt. xxvi. 65), to speak of the Son of man as being at God’s right hand.<sup>b</sup> There had been nothing in his speech to justify his condemnation on the formal charge against him. But blasphemy was punishable by death, and his judges caught at the justification, which these words supplied, for stoning him. They felt, as Caiaphas had felt (Matt. xxvi. 65), ‘What further need have we of witnesses?’ There seems, however, to have been no formal sentence, though the method of his death was

<sup>a</sup> Ramsden, i. 145.

<sup>b</sup> Simcox, p. 37.

that which the Law prescribed for blasphemy (Levit. xxiv. 14); and it was carried out, not by the crowd, but by the accusers in the appointed way (Deut. xvii. 7). Too much must not be made of the absence of formal sentence, since it was the intention of the Law that the death of a blasphemer should be the expression of the national indignation.<sup>a</sup>

**58. out of the city.** In accordance with the Law (Levit. xxiv. 14). If Stephen passed, as is likely, through the same gate by which Jesus had been led to Calvary, the associations may well have shaped his thoughts and recalled to his memory his Lord's dying words.

**stoned him.** This cruel punishment was, like many other Jewish customs, learned in Egypt (Ex. viii. 26). If Stephen's execution took place in A.D. 37, the year of the recall of Pilate and of the death of the Emperor (see note on v. 33), the high-handed procedure may be explained. At the Passover of that year the Proconsul removed the newly appointed high priest, possibly on account of this very usurpation of authority during the interregnum.<sup>b</sup>

**a young man, named Saul.** This is the first mention in history of the man who has exercised as wide an influence on human thought and action as any one of the race. Little could he have dreamt that, while the clothes of the stoners were being laid at his feet, the mantle of the stoned was falling upon his shoulders.<sup>c</sup>

Some twenty-five or thirty years later Paul called himself (Philem. 9) an 'old man'. But the Greek word there employed would denote a man over fifty rather than one of seventy; and his laborious life may well have aged him prematurely. He was probably, at this time, at least thirty, since the responsible commission shortly afterwards entrusted to him (ix. 2) precludes the idea that he was younger. It has been inferred from xxvi. 10—'I gave my vote against them'—that he was a member of the Sanhedrin: but the words need imply no more than the moral 'approval' of viii. 1. And it is obviously unlikely that a Hellenist, who was neither a priest nor a Sadducee, and who, though educated at Jerusalem, had been for some time absent from the city (since he cannot have been at Jerusalem during Jesus' ministry, nor could he have learnt there a Cilician trade), should have been given a seat in that august body. Further, it is not certain that he was married; and though there is

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 90; Simcox, p. 29.

<sup>b</sup> Pressensé, p. 38; Hausrath, ii. 163.

<sup>c</sup> Noble, p. 277.



no clear evidence that marriage was an indispensable qualification for membership, it was undoubtedly a condition usually enforced. The natural inference from his words in 1 Cor. vii. 8, 'I say to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I, is that he was at that time a widower; for though the word translated 'unmarried' may mean either 'bachelor' or 'widower', the word translated 'widows' cannot denote 'spinsters'.

**59. and saying.** Both these utterances of Jesus, which Stephen adopts, are recorded only in Luke's Gospel (xxiii. 34, 46).

**Lord Jesus.** It is well to note how clearly the Church, within a few years of Jesus' death, recognized His Divinity.

**60. lay not.** The dying prayer of the Old Testament martyr, Zechariah, had been a malediction on his murderers. 'The Lord look upon it, and require it' (2 Chron. xxiv. 22). Not so had Stephen learned Christ.<sup>a</sup> There was one present who was ever after haunted by the memory of that upturned face and those dying words. (See xxii. 20; and compare vii. 5-8 with Rom. iv. 10-19; vii. 51 with Rom. ii. 29; vii. 53 with Gal. iii. 19; and vii. 60 with 2 Tim. iv. 16.<sup>b</sup>) It may be that Stephen's eyes fell on the young man standing by, with the clothes of the accusers at his feet. He had met him in argument in the Cilician synagogue; he knew his ability and learning and zeal; knew that, like himself, he was a man with the courage to face a mob: and his prayer may even have been specially for him.<sup>c</sup>

**fell asleep.** So Stephen won the crown which his name foreshadowed. 'Fell asleep' may seem a strange description of the death of one who fell bruised and crushed under the murderous hail of stones. But beautiful as the expression is for the peace of the dying Christian, it has been responsible for a serious misconception. For death is not a sleep, but the entry on a larger life.

What might not Stephen, with his rare gifts of mind and character, have achieved for the early Church, if his life had not been prematurely cut off! It is the common cry, whenever the useful worker is struck down. But his early martyrdom may have profited Christendom more than long labours and a natural death could have done. Who can say how far Paul's life was not due to Stephen's death? 'The Church owes Paul', says Augustine,<sup>d</sup> 'to the prayer of Stephen'. And who can tell how many Christians have been braced in the arena or

<sup>a</sup> Goulburn, p. 181.

<sup>c</sup> Binney, p. 65.

<sup>b</sup> Conybeare and Howson, i. 70.

<sup>d</sup> Sermo 94.

at the stake by the example of the first of the noble army of martyrs? or how many have been led to Christ by the story of his faith and courage and Christlike death?

viii. 1. **approving.** The Greek word expresses, not passive consent, but hearty approval. Luke is probably recording a confession which he had himself heard from the lips of St. Paul, who uses the same word in this connexion (xxii. 20). A passage in his letters, where it also occurs (Rom. i. 32), suggests that he regarded his guilt in abetting as in no way less than that of those who cast the stones. Yet he acted under a sense of duty, however mistaken. 'I verily thought', he says (xxvi. 9), 'I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.' He was fulfilling the Lord's prediction, 'The time cometh when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service' (John xvi. 2).

And his action was natural enough. His knowledge of Jesus' ministry was probably derived exclusively from the Pharisees, who had so bitterly opposed His teaching. The new sect acknowledged as the Messiah a man who had been condemned by the Sanhedrin and crucified as a criminal by the Roman Governor, making the highest hopes of his people to become a byword. To Saul it must have seemed sheer madness to suppose that the crucified Nazarene could be the long-looked-for Messiah, and that He had risen from the dead.<sup>a</sup>

**on that day.** The Greek will bear the general sense of 'at that time', but it is more natural to understand it literally. The excited crowd rushed straight from the stoning, their passion fed rather than appeased by the deed of blood, to attack the Christians. The Apostles had previously come into collision with the Jewish authorities, but now for the first time Christianity came into conflict with Judaism. The result upon the Church was twofold. Externally, persecution forced it to take up an independent position. Internally, it rendered the former attitude of Christians to the Law untenable. New questions were forced to the front—Was the Law still binding on the new Society, or was it abolished through Christ? Was Christianity the true Judaism, or was it something different and new? Was circumcision an essential door into the Kingdom, or was faith in Jesus sufficient? These questions, though not yet formally raised, were henceforth in the air? The Christians might still cherish the feeling that they were members of the Jewish Church, but the

<sup>a</sup> Farrar, i. 82; Weinel, p. 66; Meyer, p. 39.

rejection of Christianity by the Jewish authorities was the first step to a severance between the two bodies.<sup>a</sup>

**they were all scattered.** The 'all' must be understood with some limitation. It is clear that the rage of the Pharisees was mainly directed against the Hellenist section of the Church, leaving the narrower Jewish section unmolested. That those who were scattered were chiefly Hellenists is implied in xi. 20; while, on the other hand, we learn from ix. 26 that there were other disciples, besides the Apostles, at Jerusalem. The consequence was important. The difference between the Hebrews and the Hellenists was emphasized; and the Church in Jerusalem became henceforth almost purely Hebrew.

The word translated 'scattered' is the same as in xi. 19, and its use is significant—the regenerate Israel takes up the ministry of the unfaithful Israel, and becomes in the Providence of God a 'Dispersion' among the Gentiles.<sup>b</sup> Luke does not dwell upon the details of the persecution, since its importance to him lay in its bearing on the spread of the Gospel.<sup>c</sup> The action, which threatened the existence of the new faith, served only to place it on a surer and wider basis, to extend its range of influence and enlarge its ideals.

**except the Apostles.** Special courage on their part will not explain their immunity. No bravery would have protected them from the zeal of Saul. It is clear that Stephen's teaching was quite different from any heard from the Apostles.<sup>d</sup> They were Hebrews, constant in their attendance at the Temple; and a sharp line was drawn between them and the Hellenists, with whose views they probably had little sympathy. They were men of narrower ideas and more restricted education. The presence of the Spirit in their hearts was quite consistent with intellectual slowness and mental inability to recognize at once the leadings of Divine Providence. It is further likely that we overestimate their prominence in the public gaze. The title 'Apostle' connotes for us an extraordinary office and dignity. But the Sanhedrin knew them only as 'common men without learning' (iv. 13), and would pay much less attention to them than to brilliant and cultured Hellenists like Stephen and Philip.<sup>e</sup>

**2. devout men.** If Christians had been meant, they would have been called 'disciples'; if Gentile proselytes, the Greek word used in xiii. 43, 50; xvi. 14; xvii. 4, 7, would have been employed. The

<sup>a</sup> Weizsäcker, i. 75 seq.; Dobschütz, p. 149 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Chase, p. 65.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, i. 236.

<sup>d</sup> Geikie, p. 61; Hausrath, ii. 159.

<sup>e</sup> Stokes, i. 347 seq.

epithet used here is elsewhere applied to Jews (Luke ii. 25; Acts ii. 5, xxii. 12), and Hellenist Jews are probably meant. The Hellenist Christians had fled, the Hebrew Christians had little sympathy with the views for which Stephen had died. But certain Hellenists, who were not avowed Christians but were favourably impressed by Christianity, showed their respect for their brother Hellenist by giving honourable burial to his body; as Joseph and Nicodemus had under similar circumstances done in the case of Jesus (John xix. 38 seq.). This involved some courage, since Stephen had been stoned for blasphemy.

**made great lamentation.** The formal Jewish wailing for the dead. This implied, under the circumstances, a protest against the action of the Sanhedrin, which may not have been unanimously approved by the Jews.

**3. But Saul.** On several occasions Paul refers to his action at this time (xxii. 4, xxvi. 11; Gal. i. 13, 23; 1 Cor. xv. 9; Phil. iii. 6; 1 Tim. i. 13). These statements show him to have pursued a course of steady and cruel repression, but in ignorance and mistaken zeal. He was not, before his conversion, any more than after it, a man to do things by halves, or from any but the highest motives. That he had the Jewish authorities at his back is shown by the words 'committed to prison'.

This verse concludes the first of the three stages of the programme mapped out in i. 8. Luke does not again refer to the progress of evangelistic work in Jerusalem.<sup>a</sup>

**4. went about preaching.** The Apostles had been charged 'not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father' (i. 4). But Pentecost had come and gone, and still they tarried there.<sup>b</sup> So far they had done nothing to carry out their Master's commission to preach beyond Jerusalem (i. 8). And now it was not by any deliberate plan of missionary work or by any conscious action of theirs, but through causes which they could not control, that the Church began her aggressive march. When those whom He had commissioned failed to undertake the duty laid upon them, God fulfilled His purposes through the very means which man employed for their defeat. He brought good out of evil, making 'the wrath of man to praise him' (Ps. lxxvi. 10). One, who was destined to do a splendid work for Christianity as Paul the Apostle, conferred his first service, as Saul the persecutor, by teaching the Church her

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 95.

<sup>b</sup> Burrell, p. 96.

missionary vocation. Like Cyrus, he ‘performed the pleasure of God, howbeit he meant not so, neither did his heart think so’ (cf. Is. xlv. 28, x. 7). The knowledge of the Gospel had, no doubt, been previously carried beyond the limits of Judaea by pilgrims returning to their homes. But they were not travelling evangelists. Luke is right in representing this persecution as constituting an epoch in the history of missionary effort.<sup>a</sup>

NOTE. The above section (vii. 58–viii. 4) looks like an unskilful combination of two sources, as though Luke interpolated the references to Saul into a narrative in which he was not named.<sup>b</sup> This is clearly shown if the passage be printed with portions enclosed in brackets :— ‘And they cast him out of the city and stoned him [and the witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen], calling upon the Lord and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And sinking on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. [And Saul was approving of his death.] And there broke out on that day a great persecution against the Church which was in Jerusalem ; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the Apostles. And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. [But Saul ravaged the Church, entering house after house, and dragging forth men and women committed them to prison. They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the glad tidings of the word.]’

It will be seen that the first sentence within brackets contains a clumsy repetition of the previous ‘stoned him’ ; while the third section repeats the previous statement about the persecution ; with the result that the mention of Stephen’s burial comes very awkwardly between the two statements.<sup>b</sup>

### 5–8

<sup>5</sup> And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed to them the Christ. <sup>6</sup> And the multitudes gave heed with one accord to the things that were spoken by Philip, hearing him and seeing the miracles which he wrought. <sup>7</sup> For unclean spirits came with a loud cry out of many who were possessed ; and many

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 94.

<sup>b</sup> Hamack, *Acts*, p. 221.



that were paralytic and that were lame were healed.  
<sup>s</sup> And there was much joy in that city.

5. **Philip went.** Luke, after his manner, gives by way of illustration the details of one particular case—the preaching of Philip ; from whom he may have derived his information, when he was his guest many years later (xxi. 8). And how unlike the forecast was the actual course of events ! The Apostles had destined the Seven for secular work, and regarded preaching as their own special task (vi. 3, 4). But Stephen saw and proclaimed wider truths than they, and Philip was the first to carry the Gospel as a missionary beyond Jerusalem. These two men had more to do with the expansion of the Church than the whole body of the Twelve.<sup>a</sup> But would not any writer who was drawing on his imagination have assigned the chief part in this act of the drama to St. Peter, or at least to an Apostle ?<sup>b</sup>

The persecution may have been specially directed against Philip, whose name comes next to Stephen's in the list of almoners, and who was almost certainly, like him, a Hellenist. The early tradition that he had been one of the Seventy is inherently likely to be true, since old disciples, rather than recent converts, would be chosen for the responsible office of almoner. And since the Seventy were sent by Jesus 'into every city and place whither he himself would come' (Luke x. 1), they would have worked in Samaria, through which He journeyed later (Luke xviii. 11). This may explain why Philip went to Samaria, when driven by persecution from Jerusalem.<sup>c</sup> But, apart from such a consideration, if his home was at Caesarea, where he ended his preaching-tour (ver. 40) and where he was living twenty years later (xxi. 8), his choice of Samaria may have been determined by his familiarity with the district. Moreover, he was probably safer there than in more distant places, for the Jews had no synagogues there, nor the Sanhedrin any power. And the very opposition which Stephen's teaching had excited among the Jews would incline the Samaritans to give a refuge and a welcome to one who taught on the same lines.

The Samaritans worshipped Jehovah, practised circumcision, and observed the Sabbath ; but rejected all the Scriptures except the Pentateuch, and regarded Gerizim, not Jerusalem, as the Holy City.<sup>d</sup> The Jews looked upon them with abhorrence. The Gentiles they

<sup>a</sup> Arnot, p. 169 ; Maclaren, i. 238, 256.

<sup>c</sup> E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, i. vii. 22.

<sup>b</sup> Chase, p. 66.

<sup>d</sup> McGiffert, p. 95.

regarded only as exiles from the Covenant, the Samaritans as schismatics and apostates. 'Thou art a Samaritan' was the most injurious reproach which they could utter against Jesus (John viii. 48). Though the Lord had forbidden the Apostles (Matt. x. 5) to preach to the Samaritans during His ministry, which was specially directed to the Jews, the prohibition had been removed by Him before His Ascension (i. 8);<sup>a</sup> and the parable of the Good Samaritan and the episode of the Samaritan leper (Luke xvii. 16) may have helped Philip to conquer any religious antipathy which, as a Jew, he may have felt. But as a Hellenist he would be comparatively free from the bitter prejudices of the native Jews.

**the city of Samaria.** The article shows that the capital is meant. Though the town had been renamed 'Sebaste' in honour of Augustus by Herod the Great, the old name was still also used.<sup>b</sup> Philip would naturally go to the chief city, and such a man as Simon would be likely to make his residence there.

**proclaimed to them the Christ.** He met them on the common ground of their hope of a Messiah.<sup>c</sup> The words of the Samaritan woman (John iv. 25) show their Messianic expectations.

**6. gave heed.** Political considerations did not, as in the case of the Jews, obstruct the right conception of the Messiah on the part of the Samaritans. There must also have been some among them who had come into contact with Jesus and remembered Him; who had perhaps recognized Him as the Messiah.<sup>d</sup> In any case, the servant was reaping where the Master had sown. Samaria was the mission-field 'white for the harvest' (John iv. 35). And the soil had been further prepared by very different influences. Simon had accustomed the people to look for miracles as the attestation of a new doctrine.<sup>e</sup>

**seeing the miracles.** The news of a great Deliverer was accompanied by tokens that He was a deliverer from torments of the body and mind. This was the purpose of Our Lord's miracles, and of those which His followers wrought in His name.<sup>f</sup>

**8. much joy.** These are not solitary words. The Ethiopian 'went on his way rejoicing' (ver. 39). The Philippian jailor 'rejoiced, believing in God' (xvi. 34). Joy is the word associated from the first with Christianity. The announcement of the angels had been, 'I bring you tidings of great joy' (Luke ii. 10).<sup>g</sup> Paul tells us that 'the fruit of the Spirit is joy' (Rom. xiv. 17). Those who think

<sup>a</sup> Row, p. 72 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Josephus, *Antiq.*, xx. vi. 2.

<sup>c</sup> Shirley, p. 23.

<sup>d</sup> McGiffert, p. 96; Baumgarten, p. 57.

<sup>e</sup> Shirley, p. 25.

<sup>f</sup> Maurice, p. 100.

<sup>g</sup> Parker, i. 182.

that religion is a gloomy thing, and that faith in Christ makes men morose and sad, must go elsewhere than to the New Testament to prove their case.

## 9-13

<sup>9</sup> But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who beforetime practised sorcery in the city, and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that he was some great one. <sup>10</sup> To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is that power of God which is called great. <sup>11</sup> And they gave heed to him, because he had long amazed them with his sorceries. <sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip preaching glad tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus the Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>13</sup> And Simon also himself believed; and having been baptized he continued with Philip; and beholding signs and great miracles wrought he was amazed.

9. **Simon.** The writings of the second and third centuries are full of the achievements and evil deeds of this man. He came to be regarded as the father of all heresy. That no trace should here be found of the second-century tradition is evidence of the early date of the Acts. In his person Christianity was for the first time confronted with superstition and religious imposture, of which the ancient world was at this period full.<sup>a</sup>

**amazed.** The repetition of this word in verses 11 and 13 shows that the Samaritans were a superstitious people; and the prevailing expectation of the Messiah, with the consequent religious excitement, predisposed them to delusion. On this expectation Simon traded, 'giving out that he was some great one.'

10. **that power of God.** An emanation, that is, from the God-head; incarnate, according to a common Oriental doctrine, in the person of a man.<sup>b</sup>

12. **the kingdom of God.** The expression has not been used since the question of i. 6, which showed such a misapprehension of

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 99; Stokes, i. 355; Purves, p. 62.

<sup>b</sup> Row, p. 76.

its real nature. Its use now may imply an onward step in Christian teaching on the part of Philip.<sup>a</sup>

13. **Simon also himself believed.** He was probably half victim of self-delusion, half conscious impostor. The sincerity of his belief at the moment need not be questioned. He believed that Jesus, and not himself, was the true Incarnation of the Godhead. Recognizing in the works of Philip a power above his own, he gave up influence and gain to become his disciple. But he accepted Jesus as Divine, without realizing his personal need of Him as a Saviour. So the change was superficial, and the old nature speedily reasserted itself.<sup>b</sup>

## 14-25

14 Now when the Apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John: 15 who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit: 16 for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, 19 saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. 20 But Peter said to him, Perish thy silver, as thou art perishing, because thou hast thought to acquire the free gift of God with money. 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this word: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness and pray to the Lord, if the thought of thy heart shall indeed be forgiven thee. 23 For I see that thou art as gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. 24 And Simon answered and said, Do ye pray for me to the Lord, that none of the things which

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Pictures*, p. 56.

<sup>b</sup> Dykes, p. 262 seq.

ye have spoken come upon me. <sup>25</sup> They therefore, when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, turned back to go to Jerusalem, and preached the glad tidings to many villages of the Samaritans.

**14. when the Apostles . . . heard.** The simplicity of the statement must not be allowed to obscure its importance. To the Apostles this was the dawn of a new day—the day when others than Jews or proselytes were first admitted to the Church.<sup>a</sup>

**they sent.** The step implied no jealousy of Philip, nor any idea that his ministry was defective. When, shortly after, he ‘went about preaching the glad tidings to all the cities’ (ver. 40), we hear of no such commission to supplement his work. And, later still, it was Barnabas, and not any of the Twelve, who was dispatched on a precisely similar mission to Antioch (xi. 22). It is sometimes said that we have in this passage the origin of the later rite of Confirmation. But Luke’s language does not support the idea that the work of the Evangelist needed to be supplemented by Apostles. The motive for sending a deputation is expressly said to be that they ‘had heard that Samaria had received the word of God’. It is true that the Samaritans were circumcised, and no such objection appears to have been raised as was subsequently urged in the case of Cornelius. But many Christian Jews would be scandalized by the admission of Samaritans; and, as the responsible leaders of the Christian Society, the Apostles felt it to be their duty to examine and sanction the new departure.<sup>b</sup>

**Peter and John.** The dispatch of the two leading Apostles shows that the gravity of the occasion was realized. To John it must have been a strange experience. He was sent to the very people on whom, a few short years before, he had wished to call down fire from heaven, to invoke the falling of another flame, which should burn indeed, but not consume.<sup>c</sup>

**15. prayed . . . that they might receive.** The prayer was for the resolving of their own doubts. Though their Master had commissioned them to be His ‘witnesses in Samaria’ (i. 8), He had earlier forbidden them to enter into ‘any city of the Samaritans’ (Matt. x. 5). How were they to know that these old enemies were now indeed one

<sup>a</sup> Parker, i. 195.

<sup>b</sup> Alford, *Homilies*, p. 247 seq.; Stokes, i. 369; Maclaren, i. 241; Dykes, p. 263.

<sup>c</sup> Rackham, *Acts*; Binney, p. 94; Vaughan, i. 316; Parker, i. 195 seq.



with themselves? They would leave the solution with their Lord. If the Spirit descended on these converts, their doubt would be answered. He would testify to the expansion of the Church, as He had testified to its formation.<sup>a</sup>

**16. as yet.** That is, the outward manifestation had not taken place. There is no implication that the Holy Spirit had not been given in Baptism.

**into the name.** Luke is not indicating any Baptismal formula, but merely stating that at their Baptism they had acknowledged Jesus to be the Christ.<sup>b</sup>

**17. Then laid they.** If this passage stood alone, it would be a natural inference that the imposition of Apostolic hands could alone impart the visible gifts of the Spirit. But other passages show such an inference to be erroneous. In ii. 4, 33; iv. 31; x. 44, no human agency is suggested; and in ix. 17 it is the hands of Ananias that conveyed the gift to Saul.<sup>c</sup>

**18. when Simon saw.** He had seen Philip's miracles, but he had not before seen power transferred to others. And his cupidity woke again. Here was a prospect of obtaining unbounded wealth and influence.<sup>d</sup>

**he offered them money.** He evidently thought that the Apostles stood on the same plane as himself, and were only more accomplished sorcerers, who might be bribed to share their secret with him.<sup>e</sup>

Many legends have clustered round Simon, but the popular instinct has judged rightly in connecting his name, not with those stories, but with his offer to trade in sacred things. 'Simony' is the treatment of spiritual functions as a marketable commodity. It is generally spoken of as a sin confined to the clergy—the purchase by worldly wealth of a sphere for spiritual ministry. But in its essence it is a very common sin. It consists in a false estimate of the purchasing power of money. Money can buy none of the intrinsically best things. It can buy diamonds, but not wisdom, or sympathy, or faith, or holiness. 'God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith' (James ii. 5). Not to understand this is Simony.<sup>f</sup>

**20. Perish.** Spiritual power is the free gift of God. Simon

<sup>a</sup> Norris, p. 37; Maurice, p. 104.

<sup>b</sup> A. Plummer, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Baptism.

<sup>c</sup> McGiffert, p. 97 seq.; Maclaren, i. 242; Baumgarten, p. 60.

<sup>d</sup> Hackett, *Acts*.

<sup>e</sup> Taylor, *Peter*, p. 235.

<sup>f</sup> Maurice, p. 106; Parker, i. 199; Burrell, p. 102 seq.; Alford, *Homilies*, p. 251.

would have restricted it to those who could buy it : and the offer was indignantly rejected. Yet it does not follow that, because the answer came so promptly, there was no temptation to the man who had once said, 'Silver and gold have I none' (iii. 6). The temptation fell off from him, because he was true and single-hearted. The importance of the incident lies in its illustration of the clear moral consciousness of the new faith amid the temptations of the larger world into which it was now entering.<sup>a</sup>

**22. if the thought of thy heart.** Peter may have felt that the offence came perilously near to that sin against the Holy Spirit which 'hath never forgiveness' (Matt. xii. 31). But probably he doubted, not so much the possibility of forgiveness, as the reality of Simon's repentance.<sup>b</sup>

**23. as gall.** Peter foresees that such a sin as Simon's would be as a malignant poison to the Church, and as an unholy chain fettering her free action.<sup>c</sup>

**24. Do ye pray for me.** The words recall Exod. viii. 28, 'Entreat the Lord for me.' Like Pharaoh, Simon was frightened, but not reformed. The denunciation by one in whom he recognized a power above his own terrified him. And not recognizing that penitence is a personal matter between the soul and God, he thought that he could pray by deputy.<sup>d</sup> But he must not be condemned unfairly. One man cannot rise so high as another. The lofty nature loathes sin, and goes to God to escape it. The poorer nature fears judgment, and goes to God to escape it. The prayer of the latter will be less spiritual than that of the former, and yet God may accept it.<sup>e</sup>

It may be that our whole judgment of Simon is coloured by the later untrustworthy legends. If we only look at this narrative, it is possible to acquit him of hypocrisy. No doubt, his faith was not strong ; but we are told that he 'believed', and was 'baptized', and 'continued with Philip'; and Peter's rebuke implies a relapse quite as much as hypocrisy. In this case, the lesson which his story conveys is no less valuable. It teaches the power of old habits and old desires. Love of power and avarice were not rooted out, because he had 'believed'.

**25. to many villages.** What they had seen convinced them of the fitness of the Samaritans to receive the Gospel, and they felt that

<sup>a</sup> Maurice, p. 106 seq. ; Parker, i. 202 ; Purves, p. 63.

<sup>b</sup> Plumptre, *Acts* ; Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> Rackham, *Acts* ; Thiersch, p. 86.

<sup>d</sup> Goulburn, p. 268.

<sup>e</sup> Parker, i. 207.

the time had come to act upon their Lord's command (i. 8).<sup>a</sup> But the message cannot have been very widely accepted, since we find the Samaritans later in collision with the Christians. They were so severely punished by Zeno and Justinian for murdering Christians and destroying churches, that they never afterwards recovered.<sup>b</sup> One fact, however, of importance we do know about the Christian Church in Samaria—that it produced Justin Martyr, the first considerable writer in the early Church.<sup>c</sup>

## 26-40

The authority for this charming missionary idyll can only have been Philip himself, whose guest Luke was 'for many days' at Caesarea (xxi. 10). But certain peculiarities of style make it probable that the historian had before him a written account. The language is obviously derived from the history of Elijah—compare ver. 26 with 2 Kings i. 'And the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up,' &c.; and ver. 39 with 1 Kings xvi. 12, 'It shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee away whither I know not.' The motive for its insertion was the wish to illustrate in another direction the widening destiny of the Gospel. The Hellenism of Stephen, the persecution of Saul, and the conversion of the Samaritans were so many steps. The conversion of the Eunuch marks a further advance, since the rite of circumcision, which bridged the gulf between Jew and Samaritan, was wanting in his case.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>26</sup> But an angel of the Lord spake to Philip, saying, Rise and journey at noon on the road that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza (the same is desert). <sup>27</sup> And he rose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch, high in authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasure, and had been to Jerusalem to worship, <sup>28</sup> was returning; and sitting in his chariot was reading the prophet Isaiah. <sup>29</sup> And the Spirit said to Philip, Go near and join this chariot. <sup>30</sup> And Philip ran to him, and heard

<sup>a</sup> Neander, p. 64.

<sup>b</sup> C. W. Wilson, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Territory of Samaria.

<sup>c</sup> Sadler, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 272; Purves, p. 64; Shirley, p. 26.

him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? <sup>31</sup> And he said, Why, how should I, unless some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him. <sup>32</sup> Now the passage of the Scripture which he was reading was this:—

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;  
And as a lamb before its shearer is dumb,  
So he openeth not his mouth.

<sup>33</sup> In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:  
His generation who shall declare?  
For his life is taken from the earth.

<sup>34</sup> And the Eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other? <sup>35</sup> And Philip, opening his mouth, and beginning at this scripture, proclaimed the good tidings of Jesus to him. <sup>36</sup> And as they were journeying, they came to some water: and the Eunuch said, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me being baptized? <sup>38</sup> And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him. <sup>39</sup> And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the Eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing. <sup>40</sup> But Philip was found at Azotus; and he went about preaching the glad tidings to all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

26. **an angel.** The use of 'angel' here and of 'Spirit' in ver. 29 shows that what is meant is not any external appearance, but some inward communication. In Zechariah (i. 13) the prophetic spirit is called 'the angel that spake with me'. The Jew ignored secondary causes, and attributed results to Divine intervention. To him it was a helpful and beautiful thought that the hand of God was to be seen in all the events of life; and he described His guidance, whether it

took the shape of dreams or human agency or natural circumstances, as angelic ministry. We suffer grievous loss by understanding this beautiful imagery literally. Angels, we say, no longer appear to us. And so we ignore the presence of the Divine in common things and ordinary processes, and look for it only in the extraordinary and supernatural. We believe that the meeting between Philip and the Eunuch was Divinely brought about, but think that God leaves our meetings to the chapter of accidents.

**at noon.** The hour, as well as the route, was given. There is no point in the translation 'towards the south', because no other direction was possible if he was to go to Gaza.<sup>a</sup>

**from Jerusalem.** Jerusalem would be out of the way in travelling from Samaria to Gaza; so Philip appears to have returned with Peter and John to the capital,<sup>b</sup> in which case the excitement against the Hellenists must have subsided.

**the same is desert.** Probably a parenthetical note by the historian. It must refer to the road, not to the city. The condition of the city would have no relevance, but the loneliness of the road has. He was to go in faith by the less frequented, less promising, route.<sup>c</sup>

**27. he rose and went.** After his successful work in a populous city, the call to go upon a desert road must have seemed strange to him. If he had sought for excuses, he could have found them in abundance. But he obeyed, and obedience brought its reward. Perhaps, after the ingathering of souls in bulk, he needed to be reminded of the value of the individual soul. And one soul may be of more value to the Kingdom than many. Had Jesus not thought it worth while to utter some of His sublimest truths to a single individual, we should have had no story of the Samaritan woman at the well. And the Ethiopian may have been the germ of many converts. He carried the word of God to a new continent, and planted the seed from the vantage ground of high station.<sup>d</sup>

**a man of Ethiopia.** The words denote his nationality: he was not a Jew born in Ethiopia, but an Ethiopian. The point of the narrative is that no distinction of rank or race or physical condition was to bind the blessings of the Gospel. If the Ethiopian had been a proselyte, there would have been nothing remarkable in his conversion: one of the Seven had been a proselyte (vi. 5). This man belonged to a race descended from Ham, represented in the Scrip-

<sup>a</sup> Rendall, *Expositor*, III. viii. 21.

<sup>b</sup> Zeller, i. 268.

<sup>c</sup> Baumgarten, i. 200; Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Vaughan, i. 318; Burrell, p. 106; Noble, p. 141; Goulburn, p. 293.



tures as under a curse, and to a class which the Law excluded from the congregation of the Lord. It may be true that the word 'eunuch' is sometimes used to denote merely a court official; but this man's office is expressly stated, and his official description is preceded by the statement that he was a eunuch.<sup>a</sup>

**under Candace.** A dynastic title, like Pharaoh, borne by the queens of Ethiopia.

**had been to Jerusalem.** Devout Gentiles used to go as pilgrims to the Feasts (John xii. 20). This man may have heard from Jewish merchants something of the Hebrew religion, and in his dissatisfaction with heathenism have travelled to Jerusalem hoping to find some light to lighten his darkness.

**28. was returning.** The desert route would only be taken by a traveller who was attended by a sufficient retinue to repel attacks. The Eunuch may have chosen it for its quietness.

**was reading.** The soul-thirst, which had led to his pilgrimage, remained unslaked. As he had left Ethiopia seeking, so he was returning seeking. In this desert spot 'Ethiopia was stretching out her hands unto God' (Ps. lxxviii. 31).<sup>b</sup>

**Isaiah.** The passage (liii. 7) was apparently new to him. He may have bought the roll in Jerusalem.<sup>c</sup>

**29. the Spirit said.** It was according to the custom of the desert that a single traveller should attach himself to a caravan going in the same direction; but Philip recognized the impulse as the voice of God.<sup>d</sup> The chariot marked a foreigner: it was almost unknown as a mode of locomotion in Palestine;<sup>e</sup> and the Evangelist's heart must have leapt as he read the lesson that the Gospel was intended for all the world.<sup>f</sup>

**30. heard him reading.** The Eunuch was reading aloud, as is commonly done in the East. It was probably by no accident that he was studying this passage. The Prophets were divided into fifty-four sections. The section which begins with Isaiah lii embraces ch. lvi, which declares that under the new dispensation the artificial distinctions of the Law (Deut. xxxiii) would be abolished; and both eunuchs and sons of the stranger would have admission to the Church of God: and he may have been hoping to discover some assurance as to his own prospect of salvation.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Cotterill, p. 312; Baumgarten, i. 201.

<sup>b</sup> Arnot, p. 184.

<sup>c</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Maclaren, i. 250.

<sup>e</sup> Renan, *Apostles*, p. 144.

<sup>f</sup> Stifler, p. 72.

<sup>g</sup> Row, p. 79; J. C. Jones, p. 187; Goulburn, p. 341.

30. **Understandest thou?** The abrupt question so chimed in with his own thoughts that it did not startle or offend him.<sup>a</sup>

31. **how should I?** The African was of high rank and was travelling in state, but in his pathetic eagerness for light he was humbly ready to learn of the lowly traveller on foot, if he could help him.

32. **He was led.** The quotation is from the LXX version, which here differs considerably from the Hebrew. Both versions are obscure, but it is enough to understand that the passage describes the sufferings of the Messiah.

35. **of Jesus.** The touch of accuracy should be noticed. To the Samaritans, who were expecting the Messiah, Philip had preached the Christ (ver. 5): to the Ethiopian, who was longing for a personal Deliverer, he preached Jesus, 'the Saviour'.<sup>b</sup>

36. **what doth hinder?** Philip may have spoken of the Lord's command, 'make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them,' &c. (Matt. xxviii. 19), and the question naturally followed, 'If all nations, why may not I, an Ethiopian, be baptized?'<sup>c</sup>

[37. The Authorized Version inserts, 'And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' The words are wanting in all the best MSS., and are a second-century interpolation by some one who felt that the absence of any such formula was a dangerous precedent. But the Eunuch's proposal of baptism was itself a declaration of belief.<sup>d</sup>]

38. **he baptized him.** Peter, in the case of uncircumcised Gentiles, needed the evidence of the gift of the Spirit before he baptized (x. 47); and the agitation which followed their admission to the Church shows how courageous the act of Philip was. The Ethiopian was not only uncircumcised, but was a eunuch: still the large-hearted Hellenist did not hesitate, although he had quite recently had experience of an unworthy applicant for baptism in the person of Simon.<sup>e</sup>

39. **The Spirit of the Lord.** The Bezan text has 'the Angel of the Lord'. The words need mean no more than that Philip was urged by an impulse, which he recognized as Divinely sent, to leave the Eunuch after his baptism. That a miraculous disappearance is not intended is shown by the 'for' in the next clause. The ecstatic joy of the Eunuch was the reason why he saw Philip no more. He

<sup>a</sup> Goulburn, p. 300.

<sup>b</sup> J. C. Jones, p. 191; Goulburn, p. 344.

<sup>c</sup> Goulburn, p. 346.

<sup>d</sup> Stifler, p. 74; Dykes, p. 284.

<sup>e</sup> Maclaren, i. 254; Iverach, p. 150; Farrar, i. 262.

had a vision of a new heaven and a new earth, and perhaps scarcely realized that his instructor was gone.<sup>a</sup>

**he went on his way**—perhaps to plant in Abyssinia that Church in which the lamp of Christian truth still flickers feebly. If so, it may have been Divinely ordered that the bearer of the Gospel to that distant region should have received it in its freer spirit from a Hellenist in the desert, and not at Jerusalem from one of the Apostles.<sup>b</sup>

**rejoicing.** It is the note struck again and again throughout the Acts in the story of conversions. He had lost his master, but he had also lost his burden.

**40. all the cities.** Not content with the accomplishment of his special mission, he utilized his return journey to preach. Lydda and Joppa lay on his route, and he may have prepared the soil for Peter there (ix. 32 seq.), as he had before done in Samaria.<sup>c</sup>

**Caesarea**—where he is found settled many years later (xxi. 8). As a commercial city and the seat of the Roman Government, it offered an important sphere of missionary work.

## CHAPTER IX

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL AS AN EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY. The fact that Luke gives three accounts of this occurrence shows the importance which he attached to it. But it was its historical importance which was chiefly present to his mind. He was writing a history, not of Paul, but of the Christian Church; and for his purpose the significance of this incident lay in the fact that it won for Christianity its greatest missionary. To us, on the other hand, it is of supreme importance as one of the evidences of Christianity. Christianity does not stand or fall with St. Paul; but how much we should miss of corroboration of our faith, if we had not the story of his journey to Damascus! Here we have, thirty years before the earliest Gospel was written, a contemporary of Jesus, with the power of questioning living witnesses, exceptionally able and sane-minded, bitterly hostile to the new Faith and with no motive of self-interest to lead him to adopt it, completely and permanently, on the strength

<sup>a</sup> Swete, *The Spirit*, p. 93; Chase, p. 67; Merivale, p. 114; Olshausen, p. 464; Parker, i. 215.

<sup>b</sup> Norris, p. 39; Goulburn, p. 337.

<sup>c</sup> Arnot, p. 199; Goulburn, p. 379.

of what occurred on this journey, reversing his whole life, sacrificing all his earthly prospects of honour and advancement, and sinking his own strong personality to be thenceforward but the reflection of Jesus to the world, devoting his splendid gifts of intellect and spirit to spreading that Gospel which he had striven to stamp out. If we explain away the supernatural element, what was it which changed the whole aim and direction of this man's life? If we say that he was misled by a flash of lightning and a clap of thunder, or that his life was remoulded by a sunstroke, are we not substituting a miracle more astonishing than that which he describes? But if Jesus did, as he believed, appear to him, shining with Divine glory, on the road to Damascus, then all is explained. And it is significant that, as he advanced in life, the miraculous vision became to him, not dim with lapse of time, but only clearer and more certain in his memory. He knew, not only whom he believed, but how he came to believe. Years after (chaps. xxii and xxvi), when he wished to contrast what he was with what he had been, he reverted to this vision as the miraculous origin of his faith, as the Divine intervention which had in one instant changed the persecutor into the Christian.<sup>a</sup>

THE NATURE OF THE VISION TO SAUL. The appearance of Jesus to Saul cannot have been either a hallucination, or a merely subjective vision. He was too sane a man to base the complete reversal of his life, and the unswerving devotion to a living Person which sustained him through years of danger and hardship and persecution, on a fancy of the brain, apart from reality. True, he was a visionary as well as an eminently practical man; but he recognized his visions as such (2 Cor. xii. 1 seq.), and uses very different language about this appearance. He told Barnabas 'how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him' (ix. 27). When he wished to establish his Apostolic rank, and to prove that he was as well qualified as any of the Twelve to be a witness of the Resurrection, he asks, 'Am I not an Apostle? Have I not seen the Lord?' (1 Cor. ix. 1). In his speech to Agrippa his main topic was the Resurrection. 'Why,' he asks (xxvi. 8), 'is it judged incredible with you if God doth raise the dead?'—and he narrates this appearance on the road to Damascus as proof. Christ, he says, had appeared to him that he might be a 'witness'—able to testify to the world that he had 'seen' Him (xxvi. 16). When he enumerates the appearances of Jesus after His

<sup>a</sup> Roper, p. 107; Dykes, p. 292; Farrar, i. 202; Vaughan, ii. 14; Purves, p. 181; Stalker, p. 7; Bungener, p. 28; Burrell, p. 286.

Resurrection, he places this vision on a level with the others: 'Last of all he was seen of me also' (1 Cor. xv. 8). And there is a note of personal conviction in his words to the Romans (viii. 34), 'It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead,' which is very significant.

The only passage which might seem to lend support to the view that the vision was subjective only is Gal. i. 15, 16, 'When it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me even from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles.' But here the words 'in me' do not mean 'in my heart', but 'in me as an instrument'—'in my person, as a witness of the Gospel.' So he says to the Corinthians (2 Cor. xiii. 3), 'Seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me.'<sup>a</sup>

WAS THERE A PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION FOR SAUL'S CONVERSION? It is often said by modern commentators<sup>b</sup> that there was. We are told that, in the enforced leisure of the long journey, in the reaction of solitude after the whirl of excitement in which he had been living, misgivings, which he had found no time to face before, crowded upon his mind: that, above all, the angel face of Stephen and his dying prayer haunted him.

This theory was probably originated by those who wished to get rid of the supernatural element by representing the vision of the Lord as subjective only. But it has been adopted by others who think that in the words of Jesus (xxvi. 14), 'it is hard for thee to kick against the goad,' the goad was an awakened conscience which Saul was trying to stifle. The word, however, need mean nothing of the kind. It implies no more than that his resistance would be of no avail. He was in the hands of One stronger than himself. God had other plans for him than those which he had marked out for himself. 'The goad,' that is, was not any inward misgiving, but was external to him—the purpose of God concerning him.

But the whole theory is a gratuitous assumption which is contradicted by the plain statements of the Acts and the Epistles. Paul himself knew nothing of the compunctious misgivings so freely attributed to him by commentators. To him the change was instantaneous. He had left Jerusalem a bitter persecutor; he entered Damascus a humble disciple. Thus, while he blames himself for having persecuted the Church, he never says that he was

<sup>a</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*.

<sup>b</sup> e. g. by Farrar, i. 281.



fighting down misgivings. On the contrary, he writes (Gal. i. 14), in connexion with this persecution, that he was 'exceedingly zealous for the traditions' of his fathers. He was a persecutor from conviction. 'I verily thought,' he says (xxvi. 9), 'that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.' And, just because he persecuted as a religious duty, he says (1 Tim. i. 13), 'Howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.' And he refers to his conversion, not as a gradual process of development, but as an absolute change of direction. It was a sudden overwhelming event. Christ, he says (1 Cor. xv. 8), 'appeared to me also, as *to one born out of due time*.' The Greek word means 'a child prematurely born owing to a violent shock', and clearly expresses the suddenness and unexpectedness of his conversion.<sup>a</sup>

We can without difficulty construct Saul's conception of Christianity as derived by him from its enemies. Could this Jesus, the son of a Galilean carpenter, who had chosen twelve ignorant peasants for his special companions, who had consorted with publicans and sinners, who had no condemnation even for open sin, who had repeatedly broken the Law himself, who had blasphemously claimed to forgive sins, who had publicly rebuked the orthodox leaders of the nation, who had declared that Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed, who had been condemned by the rulers and died a felon's death—could he be indeed the Messiah? Had not God Himself condemned his pretensions by setting on his life and work the stamp of failure?<sup>b</sup> And so far from the memory of Stephen, which later influenced Paul so profoundly, having at this time disposed him favourably to the new sect, it was precisely this which specially irritated him. Before, he had hated Jesus as a blasphemous impostor: now, he had learnt that the new teaching meant the abolition of the Law and the ruin of the Temple; the annihilation of all that was dearest and most sacred to him. So he felt no hesitation about his course. The pestilent heresy must be suppressed; its extinction seemed to him the best offering which he could make to God; and of his own initiative he asked for special powers to carry out this feeling.<sup>c</sup> But in one instant all was changed. He had never doubted that Jesus was dead. The revelation that He, whom he had believed to be a dead impostor, was alive and was God, shattered at a blow the very foundations beneath his feet.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Sabatier, p. 60 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Macduff, *Paul*, p. 36; Lyman Abbott, p. 28.

<sup>c</sup> Godet, p. 80.

<sup>d</sup> Ramsay, *Pauline Studies*, p. 72.

But though he was not prepared for his conversion by any misgivings about the policy of extirpating Christianity, a preparation of another kind there had been. The seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans shows that the young Pharisee, with his deeply religious nature, had not found peace in Judaism. The vivid representation there given of the condition of man under the Law is no result of general inference, but is plainly drawn from personal experience. He had been seeking from Judaism what Judaism had not to give. His life of righteousness was a failure. There was the real preparation for his conversion. He was not satisfied with a righteousness of works.<sup>a</sup>

SAUL A 'CHOSEN INSTRUMENT' (ver. 15). Rarely in history has any man been fitted for his vocation in life, alike by outward circumstances and by mental and moral equipment, as was St. Paul.

Born at Tarsus, a populous commercial city, thronged with sailors and merchants and students from all parts of the world, reproducing in itself the varied civilizations of the age, he learnt to understand life under different aspects, to look with tolerance on diverse customs, to adapt himself, as no Palestinian Jew could have done, to men of every class and race.

Born of Jewish parents, who were Hellenists by accident, not by conviction, to whom distance from the Holy City only made fidelity to Judaism more imperative, he early learnt the treasure committed by God to the Jewish people, and grew up 'a Hebrew of Hebrews' (Phil. iii. 5).

Though he did not receive a Greek education, which the strict Hebrews regarded as grossly immoral, he yet breathed in his boyhood a Greek atmosphere, and learnt to speak with facility the language which afterwards enabled him to preach without an interpreter wherever he went.

Sent at an early age to Jerusalem to be trained under Gamaliel as a doctor of the Law, he gained a profound knowledge of the Scriptures, and an intimate acquaintance with the system of the Pharisees, which were invaluable to him later in coping with Judaizing opponents.

The possession of the Roman citizenship gave him a recognized position, and afforded him protection, in every part of the Empire.

Nor was it an accident that the future Apostle to great cities was

<sup>a</sup> Purves, p. 74; Zeller, i. 294; Weizsäcker, i. 88; McGiffert, p. 121; Gilbert, p. 36.

a tent-maker of Tarsus, and not a Galilean fisherman.<sup>a</sup> The craft by which the other Apostles earned their livelihood in youth could not be pursued everywhere. The trade which gave to Paul his sturdy independence could be plied wherever he went, since, owing to the mode of travelling in the East, there was a permanent demand for tents.<sup>b</sup>

To these external qualifications were added great personal gifts : the manners of good society and the facile adaptability of a man of the world ; a physical constitution which was proof against the strain of incessant travel by land and sea ; an intellect acute and versatile, able to grasp great principles underlying accidental circumstances ; a burning eloquence, combined with rare skill in seizing on oratorical points ; a heroic courage, which no difficulty or danger or persecution could daunt ; a heart full of warmth and love and tender sympathy—all these were his before his conversion. And after it they were but accessories to the perfect offering of self, to the absolute devotion of the whole man to a personal Leader, which enabled him to say, into whatever city or company he came, 'It is no more I'—with whatever honours you may crown me—'no more I that live, but Christ that liveth in me.'<sup>c</sup>

Thus all the experiences through which he had been brought before his conversion were utilized in his life as a disciple of Jesus. Heredity, environment, natural gifts, and the grace of God, all combined to fit him for his work as an Apostle of that Gospel which stood at the confluence of three great civilizations. For as a Hebrew of Hebrews, yet a Hellenist and a Roman citizen, he combined in himself, as no other single man has ever done, the three great nationalities of the ancient world.<sup>d</sup> And the combination served him at every turn. If he had not been a Jew, he could not have gained admission to the synagogues of the Jews ; and everywhere he made the offer of salvation to them first. If he had not been a Hellenist, he could not have reached foreign Jews at all. For such work he alone of the Apostles was fitted. If 'Christ crucified' had not long and deeply offended him, he could never have realized the stumbling-block which a crucified Messiah was to the Jews. If he had not been a Pharisee, 'taught according to the perfect manner of the Law of the fathers' (xxii. 3), he could never have realized the intolerable burden of its yoke, and the impossibility of finding peace

<sup>a</sup> Hausrath, iii. 15.

<sup>c</sup> Huntington, p. 46.

<sup>b</sup> Neander, p. 181 ; Godet, p. 77.

<sup>d</sup> Stanley, p. 163 ; Schaff, i. 68.

in legal observances. Unless Paul the Pharisee had risen above the Law through the Law, he could not have emancipated the Gospel from Jewish particularism; any more than Luther could have done his work, if he had not had personal experience of the order of things which he was called to reform.<sup>a</sup> What wonder that, looking back upon his life, he saw that it had been all Divinely ordered, and could say (Gal. i. 15), 'God, who separated me from my mother's womb'!

## 1-9

<sup>1</sup> But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, <sup>2</sup> and asked from him letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> And as he journeyed and drew nigh to Damascus, suddenly there flashed round him a light out of heaven: <sup>4</sup> and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, Saoul, Saoul, why art thou persecuting me? <sup>5</sup> And he said, Sir, who art thou? And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou art persecuting. <sup>6</sup> But rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. <sup>7</sup> And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man. <sup>8</sup> And Saul rose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. <sup>9</sup> And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

1. **yet.** The word seems to imply some lapse of time since the death of Stephen.<sup>b</sup>

**breathing threatening.** Persecution was to Saul as the air he breathed. Jacob's prophetic description of Benjamin (Gen. xlix. 27)—'Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf'—was fulfilled in the person of the greatest of his descendants.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Pressensé, p. 71; Pfeiderer, *Hibbert*, p. 13; Bungener, p. 13.

<sup>b</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> Howson, *Scenes*, p. 3; Fouard, *Paul*, p. 101.

**went to.** Perhaps persecution had done its work in Jerusalem, where he had been armed with inquisitorial powers (xxvi. 10): perhaps his anger was intensified by learning that the hated Samaritans had been admitted to the new Community.<sup>a</sup>

**the high priest.** This was Theophilus, who had been appointed by the Roman Governor, Vitellius. As a Sadducee, he may have been pleased by this application from one who was a pupil of Gamaliel, and a rising man in the rival sect. But it is more likely that he was glad to see the young enthusiast safely out of Jerusalem. The Sadducees were not intolerant bigots, but time-serving politicians; and place-holders are not usually inclined to favour *trop de zèle*.<sup>b</sup>

**2. asked from him letters.** It is interesting to see in the man Saul the characteristics of the man Paul. It was the same restless energy, which hurried him to Damascus to crush out Christianity, that carried him to the ends of the earth as a missionary of the Gospel. Conversion only changed the cause for which he lived. There was no change in the moral region. He had not to turn from a life of sin or love of the world: he had always striven to make God's will his will. It was a change of conviction. Paul the Christian was the same as Saul the Pharisee, zealous, fearless, uncompromising: yet not the same, since all things had become new to him.<sup>c</sup>

**to the synagogues.** Probably the Christians of Damascus maintained their connexion with the synagogues. Ananias is described (xxii. 12) as 'a devout man according to the law', and held in honour by the Jews of Damascus.

**in Damascus.** Of the great cities which lay near Palestine Damascus offered the most promising field. At Antioch or at Alexandria the Roman authorities might not have permitted extreme measures, whereas the Ethnarch of Aretas would be ready to allow the Jews, who were numerous and influential at Damascus, to deal with their own refractory members.<sup>d</sup> But the words of xxvi. 11, 'I persecuted them unto foreign cities,' imply, if they be not an oratorical generalization, that this visit to Damascus was not Saul's only journey as Inquisitor beyond the bounds of Palestine.

**the Way.** So the early Christians called their religion (xix. 9, 23; xxiv. 22). The term may have arisen from 'the way of the Lord'

<sup>a</sup> Arnot, p. 199; Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> Binney, p. 46; Lyman Abbott, p. 35.

<sup>c</sup> Connybeare and Howson, ii. 140; Barnes, *Scenes*, p. 52; Wrede, p. 10.

<sup>d</sup> E. Hatch, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 1368.



of Isaiah (xl. 3), or from the 'I am the Way' of Jesus (John xiv. 6). In either case, it signified that they claimed to have found a new and living way to God; and further, that they had grasped the practical side of the Gospel, that it was something more than a creed.<sup>a</sup>

**or women.** Woman, restored by Christianity to her proper honour, was also counted worthy to suffer for the cause.

**bring them bound.** Damascus was entirely independent of Judaea, but Julius Caesar had issued a decree,<sup>b</sup> permitting the Jews everywhere to live under their own laws, and had ordered its proclamation in all the chief cities. As the authority of the high priest at Jerusalem was universally admitted by the Jews, his jurisdiction over Jews, wherever they lived, in things pertaining to their own religion would not be disputed.<sup>c</sup>

**3. And as he journeyed.** If he took the usual route, he passed through Samaria; and the remembrance of the conversions there recently made to Christianity would deepen his fanatic determination to extirpate the heresy.

Three accounts of the Conversion are given in the Acts. They differ in details; they agree in substance. The differences are fatal to any theory of verbal inspiration, but are no argument against the general truth of the narrative. Indeed, its credibility is enhanced by the fact that along with agreement in essentials are found unimportant variations in accidents. It is not wonderful that in one account men should be described as hearing a voice, but not seeing the speaker; in another as seeing a light, but not hearing the words spoken. The same fact is conveyed—that the message reached Saul and not his companions. That is the essential point: neither the light nor the sound was more than an accident of the vision. Luke's narrative is probably a summary of what he had learnt about it from St. Paul, and he writes it from a purely historical motive. The description in the two speeches in which St. Paul refers to his conversion is controlled by the immediate purpose of the speaker. In ch. xxii, addressing Jews, he emphasizes the part which the devout Jew, Ananias, played. In ch. xxvi, addressing Agrippa, he does not mention Ananias at all, but condenses the Lord's commands into one sentence. Luke may have heard both these speeches delivered; but whether this be so or not, he shows, by giving the

<sup>a</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*; Maclaren, i. 274.

<sup>b</sup> Josephus, *Antiq.* xiv. 10.

<sup>c</sup> Norris, p. 149; Stokes, ii. 31.

three accounts in the same book, that he saw no real discrepancies between them. If a man of his education and intelligence had written statements which were inherently contradictory, the fact could scarcely have escaped his notice.<sup>a</sup>

How little the writers of the New Testament cared for verbal accuracy is shown by the fact that of the four accounts of the Voice heard at the Transfiguration three are different:—‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’ (Matt. xvii. 5; 2 Pet. i. 17); ‘This is my beloved Son; hear ye him’ (Mark ix. 7); ‘This is my Son, my chosen; hear ye him’ (Luke ix. 35). Even the words of so solemn an inscription as that above the Cross are different in all four Gospels:—‘This is Jesus, the King of the Jews’ (Matt. xxvii. 37); ‘The King of the Jews’ (Mark xv. 26); ‘This is the King of the Jews’ (Luke xxiii. 38); ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews’ (John xix. 19).

**drew nigh.** It was ‘about noon’ (xxii. 6), and the light was ‘above the brightness of the sun’ (xxvi. 13), as though to exclude any natural explanation of the phenomenon. Some have argued <sup>b</sup> that the fact that Saul was travelling at an hour when Eastern travellers usually rest shows that he was ill at ease. But the journey of 140 miles would occupy six days; and, if he left Jerusalem at the close of the Sabbath, he might be pressing on in order to reach Damascus before the next Sabbath.

4. **Saoul, Saoul.** The Hebrew form agrees with the statement (xxvi. 14) that the voice spoke in Hebrew. Probably Aramaic, not Greek, was the language in which Saul habitually thought. The repetition of the name is characteristic of the Jesus of the Gospels—‘Martha, Martha’ (Luke x. 41); ‘Simon, Simon’ (Luke xxii. 31); ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem’ (Matt. xxiii. 3). Here, as there, it marks a mixture of reproof and tender pity. Men do not reiterate the name when they speak in anger.<sup>c</sup> To Saul it may have recalled the declaration of old (Isaiah xlv. 4), ‘I have even called thee by thy name, though thou hast not known me.’ He never ceased to feel the impression here made of Christ’s personal interest in him. He felt that

‘Love so amazing, so Divine,  
Demands my life, my heart, my all’,

<sup>a</sup> E. Hatch, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 1368; Maurice, p. 128; Swete, p. 123; Olshausen, p. 468; Purves, p. 75; Binney, p. 56.

<sup>b</sup> e.g. Farrar, i. 190.

<sup>c</sup> Arnot, p. 209; Blunt, i. 22.

and lived always as though he saw his Lord standing by him, watching his actions and listening to his words.

**why art thou persecuting me?** After this question came, as we learn from xxvi. 14, 'It is hard for thee to kick against the goad'—words which clearly show the mental attitude of Saul—no predisposition to Christianity, but absolute antagonism—up to the very moment of the vision.<sup>a</sup> How human is the Ascended Lord, who speaks thus in a common proverb!<sup>b</sup> Was it not said of Him in His earthly ministry that 'without a parable spake he nothing unto them' (Matt. xiii. 34)?<sup>c</sup>

5. **Sir.** The Greek word is the usual title of respect, and is translated 'sir' in xvi. 30, and in John v. 7; xii. 21; xx. 15; and should be so translated in John ix. 36. It is true that it is not an adequate rendering here; but, on the other hand, Saul could not have meant 'Lord' in its full sense. He had not yet recognized Jesus, though the thought that it was He must have flashed into his mind.<sup>d</sup>

**who art thou?** That Saul saw a real Person, and not a mere vision, is clear from the contrast in ver. 7, 'beholding no man,' as well as from the language of verses 17 and 27, and xxvi. 16. The Greek word used by Luke in xxvi. 19 is used by him in his Gospel (i. 22, xxiv. 23) of supernatural appearances seen by men in a waking state; and is different from the word which he employs (ix. 10, x. 3, xi. 5, xii. 9) for visions seen in sleep or ecstasy.<sup>e</sup> The natural inference from the fact that Saul did not recognize Jesus, as Stephen did (vii. 56), is that he had not seen Him in His life on earth.<sup>f</sup>

**whom thou art persecuting.** The words rang in Paul's ears for life. They involved all his later teaching of the oneness of the Head and the members. And the answer to the question which was doubtless on his lips, 'When did I persecute thee?' had been given by the Lord already (Matt. xxv. 40)—'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.'<sup>g</sup>

6. **But rise.** The command was, as we learn from xxii. 10, preceded by the question, 'What shall I do, Lord?' Overwhelmed by the revelation of the Divinity of Him whom he had regarded as an ordinary man who was dead, his resistance was in an instant ended:

<sup>a</sup> Swete, p. 125; Purves, p. 79.

<sup>b</sup> Pindar, *P.* ii. 174; Aesch. *Agam.* 1624; Eur. *Bacch.* 795; Ter. *Phor.* i. 2, 28; Plaut. *Truc.* iv. 2. 55.

<sup>c</sup> F. B. Meyer, p. 53.

<sup>d</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*; Lyman Abbott, p. 37; Burrell, p. 120.

<sup>e</sup> Purves, p. 79.

<sup>f</sup> Farrar, i. 196.

<sup>g</sup> Arnot, p. 205; F. B. Meyer, p. 56; Macduff, *Paul*, p. 61.

and, like another Thomas (John xx. 28), he was ready to cry, 'My Lord and my God'; like another Samuel (1 Sam. iii. 9), to say, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.'

**it shall be told thee.** There is no reproach beyond the first tender remonstrance, 'Why art thou persecuting me?' The Lord, who knows the heart, turns at once from the past to the future. But now, what needed miraculous intervention having been done by miracle, what could be effected by human instrumentality is left for human agents to do.

**7. beholding no man.** So we read in Dan. x. 7, 'I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men that were with me saw not the vision, but a great quaking fell upon them.'

**8. he saw nothing.** He gives the explanation in xxii. 11—'for the glory of that light.' The blindness was a proof that the vision was no hallucination, and did not rest on his own unsupported statement. It was also a rebuke to his self-confident belief that he was a clear-sighted leader. He who had fancied himself able to guide others had himself to be guided, like a helpless child.<sup>a</sup>

**into Damascus.** How different an entry from what he had contemplated! No dreaded Inquisitor, at the head of his retinue, commissioned to arrest the Nazarenes, but a humbled man, clinging to the hand of his guide, himself a disciple of the Nazarene, he passed through the gate.<sup>b</sup> We should like to know what he said to his companions, with what words he gave up his letters of authority, what his companions had to say. It must have been known in Damascus that he had been blinded in his approach to the city, and incapacitated, at least temporarily, for the work of inquisition; but that he had undergone a complete change of conviction had apparently not yet been declared by him, since at the end of three days Ananias had heard nothing of it.

**9. three days.** The Bible is reticent, as always; but they must have been days of terrible strain and conflict; passed among companions who could give him no sympathy; in ignorance whether the darkness in which he was plunged might not be irrevocable, his sight permanently scorched out by the heavenly glory; with the whole foundations, on which he had hitherto built, shattered; his life a mistake from first to last. What wonder that he was oblivious of the needs of the body, and 'did neither eat nor drink'! Yet

<sup>a</sup> Baring-Gould, p. 89; Schaff, i. 273.

<sup>b</sup> Farrar, i. 199; Ball, p. 22; Stalker, p. 59.

all the while the tender voice, 'Saoul, Saoul,' was in his ears, and before his eyes the glorious form of Jesus. That was the primary fact on which his new faith rested—the crucified Nazarene was living, and was God. If the Divine strength had cast him down, the Divine love encompassed him. Then and there, all that men hold dearest—worldly position, ambition, friendships, family ties, everything—was given up, was 'counted but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ' (Phil. iii. 8).

10-19 *a*

A single MS. of the old Latin Version omits the vision to Ananias. The narrative is very similar to the apparatus of complementary visions by which Peter and Cornelius are brought together; and the resemblance does not increase the probability that such visions literally occurred. It is a characteristic of the Jewish-Christian sources to point out the Providential ordering of events by the literary device of a vision. This is found in the early chapters of Matthew's and Luke's Gospels, and constantly in the Talmud.<sup>a</sup> Such a device is a beautiful expression of the belief that events are Divinely brought about. Human agents minister to the soul in need, but it is God who sends them—to the Ethiopian, Philip; to Saul, Ananias; to Cornelius, Peter.

Indeed, the whole narrative is a witness to the faith of the early Christians in their Lord's nearness to His Church, and in the intimacy of the Divine knowledge of common human life—Saul's name is known in heaven, the city where he was born, the street in which he was staying, the man who was his host, the occupation in which he was engaged, the vision which he had seen—all is known and marked.<sup>b</sup> To them the Ascended Lord was the same Jesus of Nazareth who had said to Nathaniel (John i. 48), 'When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.'

<sup>10</sup> Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. <sup>11</sup> And the Lord said to him, Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, of Tarsus; for behold, he prayeth:

<sup>a</sup> Bacon, p. 48.<sup>b</sup> Vaughan, ii. 10; Ball, p. 24; Blunt, i. 42.



<sup>12</sup> and he hath seen a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands upon him that he may receive his sight. <sup>13</sup> But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to thy saints in Jerusalem; <sup>14</sup> and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name. <sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him, Go thy way; for this man is to me a chosen instrument, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel: <sup>16</sup> for I will shew him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake. <sup>17</sup> And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord hath sent me, even Jesus who appeared unto thee on the way as thou wast coming, that thou mayest recover thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup> And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he recovered his sight, and rose, and was baptized: <sup>19</sup> and he took food and was strengthened.

10. **Ananias.** There is no evidence that any serious breach between the Jews and the Christians at Damascus had preceded Saul's arrival, or that his visit as Inquisitor had been prompted by the Jewish community there—Ananias, though a Christian, had not forfeited the respect of the Jews (xxii. 12); and this fact made him a fit envoy to go among the Pharisees with whom Saul was probably staying.<sup>a</sup>

11. **Straight.** When the houses of ancient cities perish, the lines of the main streets usually remain unaltered. A long straight street still runs through Damascus.

**the house of Judas.** It is worthy of note that, while it is a peculiarity of the author to mention throughout the Acts the houses in which Paul or Peter lodged (e.g. Simon the tanner, x. 43; Jason, xvii. 5; Priscilla and Aquila, xviii. 3; Titus Justus, xviii. 7); this trait is equally found in the 'we'-sections (e.g. Lydia, xvi. 13;

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 25; Farrar, i. 200.

Philip, xxi. 9; Mnason, xxi. 16; and at Rome, xxviii. 16, 31), thus furnishing evidence of common authorship.<sup>a</sup>

**he prayeth.** Saul the Pharisee had, we may be sure, been always punctilious in praying. But old words acquire new meanings. He had never before prayed in the Christian sense, approaching the Father through the Son.<sup>b</sup>

13. **I have heard.** The Christians at Jerusalem had doubtless sent to warn their brethren at Damascus, and three days had now elapsed since Saul's arrival.

How simply natural is Ananias' answer. The hand of the Inquisitor would probably have fallen early on him, as one of the leaders among the Christians. To go to him seemed like venturing into the lion's den. So, like others whom God calls to duty, he tries to instruct Him, as though He were ignorant about the work to which He sends His servants. And, all the while, it was he who was ignorant, seeing only the man with the evil reputation, while Christ saw the man as His Divine grace was to fashion him.

**thy saints.** This is the first occurrence of this name for the followers of Christ. They were men 'set apart' and dedicated; separated from the world; in it, but not of it.

15. **a chosen instrument.** Literally, 'a vessel of selection.' Saul had not chosen Christ, but Christ had chosen him. He was as a potter's vessel (Rom. ix. 21 seq.), moulded by the great Artificer for a special work.

16. **he must suffer.** 'What wilt thou have me to do?' Saul had asked (xxii. 20). The answer was, 'Thou shalt bear my cross.'

When the Lord ordained the Twelve to go out into the world, He warned them that they would be persecuted (Matt. x. 16 seq.). He laid before them a dark picture, and kept back nothing of the darkness. Now, in ordaining a new Apostle, He repeats the same ordination charge. Saul was not to be drawn into the service of his Lord under a misapprehension of what lay before him. And in his case, the sentence illustrates the Divine principle that 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap' (Gal. vi. 7). 'They stoned Stephen' (vii. 59); 'they stoned Paul' (xiv. 19). 'Many of the saints did I shut up in prison' (xxvi. 10); 'When they had laid many stripes upon him, they cast him into prison' (xvi. 23). 'Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples' (ix. 1); 'The Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would

<sup>a</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 109.

<sup>b</sup> Parker, i. 229; Vaughan, ii. 18; Alford, *Homilies*, p. 295.

neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul' (xxiii. 12). So God teaches that life is not a series of unconnected accidents, but a great and solemn stewardship, with penalties and rewards.<sup>a</sup>

**17. Brother Saul.** Saul had probably known Ananias by name, as a man prominent among the Christians at Damascus. And now the first word spoken to him by one, whose friends he had persecuted and who might himself so soon have been his victim, was 'brother'. If he had not been thus met in a loving and trustful spirit, an irreparable injury might have been done. As it was, he learnt that he was not a solitary outcast. If his new convictions meant the severance of old alliances, new friends were ready to welcome him. What, he might well feel, must be the forgiveness and the love of God, when the forgiveness and love of man could be so tender!<sup>b</sup>

**that thou mayest recover.** Not to upbraid thee for thy past, not even to remind thee of it, but that thou mayest receive love and mercy.<sup>c</sup>

**18. as it were scales.** There was no literal falling of anything; but a sensation, when the light once more smote upon his eyes, as though scales had fallen off.<sup>d</sup> The large size of his handwriting (Gal. vi. 11), and his custom of employing an amanuensis, may point to some permanent effect of the blinding light upon his sight. This may have been among 'the marks of the Lord Jesus' (Gal. vi. 17) which he bore in his body.

The restoration of bodily sight was a symbol of the gift of spiritual sight; the scales, that seemed to fall from his eyes, of the thicker scales that had fallen from his soul.<sup>e</sup>

**he recovered his sight.** He himself describes (xxii. 13) the incident with touching simplicity—'In that very hour I looked up on him.' The last sight which he had seen, before midday turned to night, had been the face of Jesus: the first, when darkness turned to light, was the face of the 'brother' sent by Him.<sup>f</sup>

**was baptized.** Perhaps in Abana or Pharpar. Thus to Saul the rivers of Damascus were 'better than all the waters of Israel' (2 Kings v. 12).

Thus not even in the case of one miraculously called by Christ Himself was Christ's own appointed rite of admission to the Church

<sup>a</sup> A. T. Robertson, p. 57; Parker, i. 236 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 49; F. B. Meyer, p. 60; Gurney, p. 177.

<sup>c</sup> Blunt, i. 55; Macduff, *Paul*, p. 74.

<sup>d</sup> Olshausen, p. 478.

<sup>e</sup> Benson, p. 199; Macduff, *Paul*, p. 75.

<sup>f</sup> Dykes, p. 309; Thomas, *Acts*, p. 149.

dispensed with.<sup>a</sup> Perhaps to no convert has it ever meant so much as to St. Paul. It was, surely, out of the remembrance of this hour of crisis that he wrote to the Corinthians (2 Cor. v. 17), 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.'

There is a curious, but probably accidental, parallelism between Luke's account of the appearance to Saul and the narrative of the appearance to Heliodorus in 2 Macc. iii. Heliodorus, we are told, having been impiously commissioned by Seleucus to seize the Temple treasure, was confronted by 'a great apparition', so that those with him 'fainted, and were sore afraid'. And when Heliodorus 'had fallen suddenly unto the ground, and great darkness had come over him, his guards caught him up, and put him into a litter, and carried him—him that had just now entered with a great train . . . himself now brought to utter helplessness, manifestly made to recognize the sovereignty of God. And so he, through the working of God, speechless and bereft of all hope and deliverance, lay prostrate'. But, on the intercession of Onias, he recovered, and the same apparition as before stood beside him, saying, 'Since thou hast been scourged from heaven, publish unto all men the sovereign majesty of God . . . And he testified to all men the works of the great God which he had beheld with his eyes' (2 Macc. iii.).

### 19 b-22

THE RETIREMENT TO ARABIA. When we compare St. Paul's words to the Galatians (i. 17, 18), 'Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before me; but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem,' &c., the natural inference is that Luke knew nothing of the sojourn in Arabia. He was narrating events which happened more than a generation before he wrote, and of which he had no knowledge until many years after their occurrence. But the omission to mention facts does not necessarily imply ignorance on his part. For instance, Paul's speech to the Elders of Ephesus, which Luke records in ch. xx, contains details of his life there which Luke has not given in ch. xix. It is characteristic of Luke to pass over long intervals of time and proceed straight to the next event which he

<sup>a</sup> Cotterill, p. 344; Olshausen, p. 479; Alford, *Homilies*, p. 300.

deems of importance in the history.<sup>a</sup> The life of the Church, not the inner life of any individual, was the subject of his book. He does not profess to give all the influences which moulded Paul's development. St. Paul himself did not regard this retirement as of importance to others. In neither of the speeches in which he tells the story of his conversion does he allude to it, but he mentions his journey to Jerusalem in direct connexion with his conversion, without a hint of any long interval (xxii. 16, 17; xxvi. 20).<sup>b</sup> And his motive for mentioning his retirement to the Galatians was simply to prove that he was absent from Jerusalem.

Whether Luke knew of the visit to Arabia or not, it can be fitted into the narrative in the Acts, for the language is such as to imply two several stays at Damascus. There is one period which he describes as 'certain days' (ver. 19)—a vague term, but usually indicating a short time (x. 48; xv. 36; xvi. 12; xxiv. 24; xxv. 13); and another which he describes as 'many days' (ver. 23)—a term equally vague, but usually indicating a time of some duration: it is, for example, the phrase used in 1 Kings ii. 38 for a period of three years. Nothing could be more natural, or more consonant with Saul's character, than that 'straightway' after his baptism he should make a public profession of his faith in 'Jesus' (ver. 20): should then go into retirement for a season, to recruit after the exhausting strain and to think out his position: and on his return should preach his developed faith, 'endued with power' and proving that Jesus was 'the Christ' (ver. 22). If we insert the sojourn in Arabia after ver. 21, we have an explanation of the otherwise unexplained increase of power.<sup>c</sup>

WHAT IS MEANT BY 'ARABIA'? Some<sup>d</sup> think that the country adjacent to Damascus on the east is meant. But it is more likely that St. Paul went to the Sinaitic peninsula. The name occurs in two passages only in his letters (Gal. i. 27 and iv. 25); it certainly means this in the latter, and therefore probably means it in the former also.<sup>e</sup> It was a spot hallowed by great memories. There Moses had seen the burning bush, and had communed with God on the mountain: there Elijah had stood at the entrance of the cave, and heard the 'still, small voice'. There would be a peculiar fitness in the great

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 24 seq.; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 380.

<sup>b</sup> Baumgarten, i. 208.

<sup>c</sup> G. G. Findlay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Paul the Apostle; Row, p. 97.

<sup>d</sup> e.g. Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 380.

<sup>e</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 88; Howson, *Scenes*, p. 19.



missionary being prepared for his work where the great Lawgiver and the great Prophet had been prepared before him.<sup>a</sup>

WHAT WAS THE MOTIVE FOR THE RETIREMENT? That Saul did not go as a missionary is shown by his own words (Gal. i. 16)—‘I conferred not with flesh and blood, but went into Arabia.’ In other words, he went to take counsel with God and with his own thoughts. He must have felt the imperative need of solitude and leisure to think out the meaning and the issues of that which had befallen him. He had believed his former creed intensely, and to surrender it must have shaken his soul to its depths. His conversion had not been brought about by a process of argument or by a gradual weakening of old convictions, but by an irresistible revelation. He was a born thinker: the new gift of the Spirit did not render unnecessary the concentrated activity of his own brain. He was intellectually incapable of reversing his whole life without weighing all that such reversal meant. The new must be reconciled with the old. The Scriptures must be studied under another Teacher than Gamaliel, from the fresh standpoint suggested by the suffering and death of the Messiah.<sup>b</sup> It is important to remember that he had had no such gradual training in the mind of Jesus as the Twelve, who had been led step by step, in half-conscious ways, to a new position. He was separated from his past by a sudden wrench; his conversion was the negation of his previous life. They came to Christ through the medium of the Old Testament. To him the Law and the Gospel were absolutely opposed. For them the appearances after the Resurrection had restored the faith in the Messiahship of Jesus which the Crucifixion had shaken; but they remained good Jews, loyal to the Law. He had been a persecutor because he saw clearly the irreconcilable opposition between Jewish thought and a crucified Messiah; and when he had learnt that the Crucified was the Messiah, the one thing impossible for him was to set up again what the grace of God had overthrown.<sup>c</sup>

WHAT WAS THE DURATION OF THE RETIREMENT? The ‘three years’ of Gal. i. 18 throws no light on this point, since it refers, not to his stay in Arabia, but to the interval before his return to Jerusalem. And the expression itself may, according to the Jewish method of reckoning, mean either three whole years or one year with portions of two. We know that he was ‘many days’ in Damascus, but this phrase also is vague, and the after-history shows that Paul was never

<sup>a</sup> Rawlinson, p. 135 seq.; F. B. Meyer, p. 62; Stalker, p. 71.

<sup>b</sup> Stalker, p. 69; L. Merivale, p. 101; McGiffert, p. 161; Rawlinson, p. 130.

<sup>c</sup> Lindsay, ii. 28; Pfeleiderer, *Primitive*, p. 94; Sabatier, p. 68.

able to work long in any city where the Jews were as numerous as they were in Damascus. Hence the probability is that the greater part of the time, whatever its duration may have been, was passed in Arabia.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>19</sup> <sup>b</sup> And he was with the disciples who were at Damascus certain days. <sup>20</sup> And straightway he began in the synagogues to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God. <sup>21</sup> And all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that made havock in Jerusalem of them who call on this name, and came hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound to the chief priests? <sup>22</sup> But Saul was more and more endued with power, and confounded the Jews who dwelt at Damascus, proving that this was the Christ.

**20. straightway.** Retirement might be necessary; but first, at once, he would publicly declare that his life hitherto had been a great mistake. No false shame should keep him silent on that point. In the very synagogue where he had meant to arrest those who believed in Jesus, he would proclaim his own belief in Jesus. He would not preach; he would not discuss—there must be thought and reflection before he could do that: but he would at once proclaim the fundamental fact of his conversion.

**as the Son of God.** Peter in his discourses had laid stress on the Resurrection of Jesus. That was the glad thought in the minds of the first disciples. But the Divinity of Jesus was the conviction which the vision on the road had flashed upon the mind of Saul.

**21. Is not this he?** The old proverb, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' (1 Sam. x. 12) was revived with a new meaning.<sup>b</sup> The Jews of Damascus were not singular in being more concerned about the inconsistency of the preacher than about the truth of his message.<sup>c</sup>

**22. endued with power.** If the visit to Arabia is to be interpolated here, Saul had now returned equipped by solitude and study for the work of teaching. And he was at Damascus what Stephen had been at Jerusalem. The words seem meant to recall vi. 8 and 10;

<sup>a</sup> Weizsäcker, i. 95; Gilbert, p. 43.

<sup>b</sup> Arnot, p. 233.

<sup>c</sup> Rawlinson, p. 108.

‘Stephen full of grace and power’; ‘They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake.’ Saul’s experience as a Pharisee would help him. Knowing what were the strongholds of Jewish prejudice, he would be able to anticipate and meet every objection.<sup>a</sup>

## 23-25

<sup>23</sup> And when many days had passed, the Jews took counsel together to kill him: <sup>24</sup> but their plot became known to Saul. And they also watched the gates day and night that they might kill him: <sup>25</sup> but his disciples took him and let him down by night over the wall, lowering him in a basket.

**23. took counsel.** Thus early were the words fulfilled, ‘I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name’s sake’ (ver. 16). He may perhaps have undergone at this time one of those five Jewish scourgings of which he wrote later (2 Cor. xi. 24). The same murderous spirit rose against him as had risen in himself against Stephen. In these adversaries he saw his former self, and by that self could measure their fury.<sup>b</sup> But they had an additional cause of resentment: they regarded him as the worst of apostates—as one who had not only forsaken the faith of his fathers, but betrayed the trust reposed in him by the high priest. No wonder that in the Jewish quarter his life was not safe.<sup>c</sup>

**24. their plot became known.** Saul, never careless of his life, though always ready, if need be, to risk it, resolved to flee. But it was no private plot, hatched by irresponsible persons. The Governor was privy to it, the gates were watched, and escape was not easy.<sup>d</sup>

**they also watched the gates.** St. Paul tells us (2 Cor. xi. 32) that the Ethnarch under Aretas tried to seize him. The statement is surprising, since Syria had long before this date become a Roman province. But the series of Damascene coins bearing the heads of Roman Emperors is found to be interrupted in the reigns of Caligula and Claudius, A. D. 37-54. Aretas, king of Petra, who defeated his son-in-law, Herod Agrippa, in A. D. 34, must have obtained tem-

<sup>a</sup> Eadie, p. 16.

<sup>b</sup> Eadie, p. 20.

<sup>c</sup> Bungener, p. 49; J. Robertson, p. 73; Hausrath, iii. 71.

<sup>d</sup> Iverach, p. 32.

porary possession of Damascus. He died A. D. 40, about three years after this time.<sup>a</sup>

It is possible that the escape from Damascus, which Luke here places immediately after Saul's conversion, really took place later in the period of missionary activity, of which we know nothing beyond the brief statement of Gal. i. 22-4, that he 'came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia'. Of that work Luke tells us nothing, though many of the experiences alluded to in 2 Cor. xi. 23 seq. probably belonged to it.<sup>b</sup>

**25. his disciples.** This unique expression is evidence of Saul's strong personal influence. The very men whom he had come to bind and imprison now save his life.<sup>c</sup>

**over the wall.** They adopt the course which the wit of a woman had devised in the olden time (Joshua ii. 15).<sup>d</sup>

**in a basket.** This night escape in a basket remained with him as a shameful memory (2 Cor. xi. 33). From the fact that he mentions it among his 'weaknesses' it might be thought that he felt some misgiving whether he had not shunned suffering for Christ's sake. But he probably meant only that the humiliating fashion in which he had to leave the scene of his first ministry was evidence of his weakness. He had laboured without result, and had had to flee for his life.<sup>e</sup>

## 26-30

<sup>26</sup> And when he was come to Jerusalem, he essayed to join himself to the disciples: and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. <sup>27</sup> But Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles, and told them how he had seen the Lord on the way, and had talked with him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. <sup>28</sup> And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, <sup>29</sup> preaching boldly in the name of the Lord: and he spake and disputed against the Hellenists; but they sought to kill him. <sup>30</sup> But when the brethren knew it,

<sup>a</sup> Godet, p. 94; McGiffert, p. 64; C. H. Turner, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Chronology of N.T.

<sup>b</sup> Bacon, p. 89.

<sup>c</sup> Pask, p. 83.

<sup>d</sup> Eadie, p. 23.

<sup>e</sup> Hausrath, iii. 72; Iverach, p. 32.

they took him down to Caesarea, and sent him away to Tarsus.

**26. when he was come.** It must have been a memorable journey for Saul. What a crowd of memories would throng upon him as he passed the spot where the Lord had appeared to him! And as he neared the capital, how the contrast between the persecuting Pharisee and the fugitive disciple would come home to him! Would he be called to account for the way in which he had failed to execute the high priest's commission? How would his old master Gamaliel, and the friends whose belief he had abandoned, receive him? And the Christians, whose Gospel he had embraced—would they be able to forget that he was the Saul who had approved of Stephen's murder and taken the leading part in the persecution which followed?<sup>a</sup>

**they were all afraid of him.** In his hurried departure, he seems to have brought no letter of commendation from the Christians of Damascus.<sup>b</sup> If he had not anticipated the possibility of this attitude, it must have been a bitter disappointment to him, coming fresh from the persecution of the Jews, to find himself repulsed by the Brethren. His bold profession of Christianity at Damascus might at least, he would feel, have spared him this!<sup>c</sup>

**not believing.** Though Luke does not say 'not knowing', their suspicion is only intelligible on the assumption of imperfect knowledge; and none of the suggested explanations of their ignorance are wholly satisfactory. Ordinarily there was constant communication between Jerusalem and Damascus; but it is possible that this had been somewhat interrupted during the occupation of the latter city by Aretas. The disciples must have heard at least a rumour of his conversion, but perhaps knew nothing of his preaching; and his absence in Arabia and his long silence did not make so improbable a story more credible. Further, the Jewish authorities, angry at his defection, may have spread reports discrediting the sincerity of his conversion. Thus the disciples may have thought that he had returned to his former faith and had some sinister motive in seeking to join them—a desire to discover their meeting-places and who belonged to their community.<sup>d</sup>

St. Paul says (Gal. i. 18) that his object in going to Jerusalem was

<sup>a</sup> Farrar, i. 229; J. Robertson, p. 74. <sup>b</sup> Eadie, p. 25; Thomas, *Acts*, p. 159.

<sup>c</sup> H. Blunt, *Paul*, i. 87; Bungener, p. 50.

<sup>d</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*; Lechler, p. 74; Barnes, *Scenes*, p. 118; Kitto, p. 157; Renan, p. 175.



'to visit Peter'. His reasons for wishing to see him may be conjectured: (i) He must often have seen Peter, and had probably heard him teach. And now he may have felt drawn to him by a special sympathy. Had not Peter been forgiven and restored, after disowning his Lord? And had not he himself, after persecuting his Lord, been pardoned and placed among His chosen leaders?<sup>a</sup> (ii) It was natural that he should wish to hear from one who had been an eyewitness from the beginning more than he yet knew of the life and sayings of Jesus. No Gospels were yet written, and he must have had much to learn about the historical facts of Christianity. True, he says (Gal. i. 11, 22) that he did not receive his Gospel from men, but directly from Christ; but by 'his Gospel' he did not mean the details of Jesus' life, but his own manner of presenting the truth. God does not work unnecessary miracles, or communicate by supernatural means that which can be acquired without such aid. St. Paul learnt historical facts by questioning those who were the authorized witnesses; his knowledge of the essential principles of Christianity he received from no man, but from the Holy Spirit.<sup>b</sup> (iii) But perhaps his main object was to discuss with the recognized leader of the Church his own commission to the Gentiles, which had been so clearly revealed to him, though many years were to elapse before he realized its full meaning. However strongly he felt that he must be independent and shape his course without human help, he might naturally wish to come into touch with the leaders of the Church and learn their attitude towards his mission. Thus this interview with Saul may, by suggesting broader views of Christianity to Peter, have served to prepare him in some degree for the vision at Joppa.<sup>c</sup>

**27. But Barnabas.** His readiness, not only to believe in, but to vouch for, Saul's sincerity suggests a previous friendship. They may have known each other at Tarsus before either became a Christian. Cyprus and Cilicia were closely connected by commerce. What is more likely than that the Cyprian, possessed of landed property and a man of ability, should be sent to study at the neighbouring University of Tarsus? Thus the two youths, the Levite and the Pharisee, both Hellenists, but both loyal to the hereditary faith, may well have formed a friendship.<sup>d</sup>

**took him.** He introduced him to Peter, who became his host

<sup>a</sup> Kitto, p. 155.    <sup>b</sup> Baring-Gould, p. 103; Pressensé, p. 88; Schaff, i, 281.

<sup>c</sup> Weizsäcker, i, 14; J. Robertson, p. 98; McGiffert, p. 167.

<sup>d</sup> Howson, *Companions*, p. 4; Plumptre, *Acts*, p. 33.

for 'fifteen days' (Gal. i. 18). A Galilean fisherman was not likely to have a house of his own in Jerusalem, and Peter was probably making his home with Mark's mother, who was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. iv. 10). It will be remembered that he went straight to her house on his liberation from prison (xii. 12).<sup>a</sup>

**to the Apostles.** This is misleading in the light of Gal. i. 18, 19, where St. Paul says that he saw only Peter and James, the Lord's brother. Some of the Twelve may have been absent among 'the Churches in Judaea' (Gal. i. 22). But the whole tone of Gal. i suggests that Saul did not wish to meet the Twelve as though he needed consecration from them, but only to visit Peter as a brother Apostle.<sup>b</sup> When he told Peter and James of the vision of Jesus at his conversion, we can imagine Peter saying, 'He appeared to me too on the day that He rose'; and James, 'And to me too afterwards.'<sup>c</sup>

**29. preaching boldly.** There are grave difficulties in the way of reconciling this account with Paul's own words in 'Galatians'; and where there are discrepancies between the Acts and the Letters, Paul's version must *prima facie* rank as of superior authority. Taking the narrative as Luke gives it, Saul went, not to the Hebrews, but to the Hellenists; perhaps because he, like Stephen, felt that as a Hellenist himself he understood them best; or he may have hoped that they would be more ready to listen to him, since he had, like them, taken part in Stephen's death. But the sight of 'this renegade', as they would term him, preaching the very doctrine which he had helped them to crush, goaded them to fury.<sup>d</sup>

**sought to kill him.** The history of Stephen was repeated. They could not answer his arguments, but they could kill him. And Saul had only to recall how he himself had felt three years before, to understand the passion which he roused.<sup>e</sup>

The vision recorded in xxii. 17 seq. is generally referred to this time. If it occurred now, Saul had gone to the Temple, perplexed and depressed. He had wished to prove his zeal as a disciple in the very city where his zeal as a persecutor had been most conspicuous. But the Hellenists of Jerusalem had rejected him and sought to kill him, as the Jews of Damascus had done. Yet his Lord had bidden him preach, and had promised to use him for great ends. What did it all mean? In this state of mind, he had taken his trouble, like

<sup>a</sup> Farrar, i. 236; Johnston, p. 29.

<sup>b</sup> Bungener, p. 51.

<sup>c</sup> Swete, p. 88.

<sup>d</sup> Eadie, p. 26; L. Merivale, p. 133; Bungener, p. 52.

<sup>e</sup> Arnot, p. 234; F. B. Meyer, p. 69.

Hezekiah (2 Kings xiv. 14), to the Temple, to 'spread it before the Lord'. And in a vision his Lord graciously disclosed to him a clearer insight into the work for which he was destined. 'Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.'

Professor Ramsay, however, thinks that this vision took place at Saul's next departure from Jerusalem (xii. 25). For Luke here distinctly states that he left the city in consequence of a plot against his life. And his definite ministry to the Gentiles did not begin till many years later—immediately after his next visit to Jerusalem. Though in the interval he did preach to Gentiles (see on verse 30) he appears to have had no clear idea as to the Divine purpose with regard to their conversion. He knew that he was called to minister to them; but not till later did he realize that Christianity was destined to break down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile.<sup>a</sup>

But the generally accepted view is preferable. The natural meaning of St. Paul's own words (Gal. i. 18), 'when I returned to Jerusalem,' is 'when I returned after the experiences at Damascus which I have just related', and not 'when I returned many years afterwards'. And while he might naturally expect his testimony to appeal to the Jews at a time when the memory of his former zeal was still fresh, he could scarcely have expected this some twelve years later, after his complete failure on this occasion.<sup>b</sup>

**30. when the brethren knew it.** The Church was only just recovering from the shock of one persecution, and the disciples did not care to face another. Apparently they were now tolerated—Peter, James, and Barnabas seem to have been safe. But the Jewish authorities were not likely to allow the propaganda of a prominent Rabbi, who was a former leader of their own party.<sup>c</sup>

**to Caesarea.** Not the inland 'Caesarea Philippi' of the Gospels, but 'Caesarea Sebaste', the seaport. The natural inference is that he went by sea to Tarsus; but his own words (Gal. i. 21), 'Then came I into the regions of Syria and Cilicia,' would suggest that he went by land, preaching perhaps at Tyre, where we hear later of disciples (xxi. 2), and at Sidon, where later he had friends (xxvii. 3). It is, however, possible that he went by sea to Tarsus, and then evangelized Cilicia and Syria; and since his work was chiefly in Syria, he names it first.<sup>d</sup> His entire reticence about his home has been

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 60 seq.; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 59; Dykes, p. 321; Baring-Gould, p. 104; J. Robertson, p. 95.

<sup>b</sup> Johnston, p. 31.

<sup>c</sup> Haweis, p. 61; Johnston, p. 30.

<sup>d</sup> Lechler, p. 77; Gilbert, p. 52.

regarded<sup>a</sup> as a proof of the final disowning of him by his relations, which followed his avowal of Christianity, and which would give special significance to his words (Phil. iii. 8), 'for whom I suffered the loss of all things.' But, on the other hand, it may be urged that, if his family had been hostile, he would not have been likely to stay so long in the district.<sup>b</sup>

Saul's life for the next eight years is wrapt in obscurity. In the main, it was probably a time of waiting—of that waiting which is often a providential discipline for those to whom exceptional work has been appointed.<sup>c</sup> But something may safely be inferred as to the manner in which he was occupied: (i) It must have been a time of study. He must have felt the need of further thinking out the relation of the Christian faith to the old dispensation. We see the result in the matured thought of his Epistles. And when, if not now, did he, who had received an essentially Hebrew training under Gamaliel, acquire his intimate knowledge of the LXX version, from which he almost invariably quotes?<sup>d</sup> (ii) It was a time of evangelistic work—those powers, which were afterwards to be displayed on a wider field, were now trained and developed. We might be sure of this from what we know of the man. It is inconceivable that he did not begin the mission of his life till years later. But there is evidence of the fact. We read (xv. 41) that Paul 'went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches'. These must have been founded by him, since he tells us (Rom. xv. 20) that it was his principle not to build on another man's foundation. And it is not easy to suggest any time but this in which he could have worked in those parts. That they were Gentile Churches is shown by the circular letter of the conference being addressed (xv. 23) to the Gentile brethren in Syria and Cilicia. Further, this conclusion is confirmed by the fact that in his first missionary journey, after visiting Cyprus, Barnabas' native land, he did not visit his own native country; which he would surely have done, if it had not been already evangelized.<sup>e</sup>

ON THE DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE ABOVE SECTION AND GALATIANS, CH. I. It is clear that Luke's information about the years which followed Saul's conversion was very incomplete. The evidence may not be conclusive, so long as the items are regarded

<sup>a</sup> e. g. by F. B. Meyer, p. 21.

<sup>b</sup> G. G. Findlay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Paul the Apostle.

<sup>c</sup> Stalker, p. 91.

<sup>d</sup> Ropes, p. 112; T. Zahn, *Expositor*, VI. viii. 234.

<sup>e</sup> Cone, p. 78; Lechler, p. 83; Iverach, p. 34; Gilbert, p. 55; Plumtre, p. 29.



separately, but their cumulative force is convincing. (i) He is silent (ver. 19) about the retirement to Arabia, and curtails the three years between the conversion and the visit to Jerusalem.<sup>a</sup> (ii) 'The Apostles' (ver. 27) would naturally mean the Twelve. No one would infer that Saul saw only two (Gal. i. 19). Though there is no absolute contradiction, it is inconceivable that Luke knew the exact circumstances.<sup>b</sup> (iii) 'He was with them going in and going out' (ver. 28) implies intimate fellowship with the Apostles. But the account in 'Galatians' is very different; and Paul, in his anxiety to show how little he had to do with them, confirms his statement with a solemn asseveration, 'Behold, before God I lie not' (Gal. i. 20).<sup>c</sup> (iv) The natural inference from verse 29 is that Saul had gone to Jerusalem to preach the Gospel, and not exclusively to 'visit Peter' (Gal. i. 18). Yet we learn (Gal. i. 22) that he had so little opportunity of making acquaintance with the Christian community in, and round, Jerusalem that he was 'still unknown by face unto the Churches of Judaea'.<sup>d</sup> (v) The animosity of the Hellenists and their plot to murder him suggest a much longer stay than 'fifteen days' (Gal. i. 19). And though the 'fifteen days' may conceivably be interpreted to mean the length of his stay with Peter and not of his sojourn in Jerusalem, the whole argument of 'Galatians' is against such an interpretation.

These discrepancies involve no charge of bad faith against Luke. The most natural explanation is that he and St. Paul are referring to different occasions. Luke had received an account, written or oral, of Paul's preaching at Jerusalem; and, writing at least a quarter of a century later, ascribed to the time of the first visit to the city what really took place at the second. On the other hand, it may be that there is some error on St. Paul's part. Whereas it has been too much the practice of English commentators, when the Acts and the Epistles conflict, to ignore the discrepancy and accept both accounts as accurate, 'if only we knew all the circumstances,' German commentators have usually rejected the Acts as untrustworthy, if its statements are in opposition to Paul's own words in his letters. But the Epistle to the Galatians was written some seventeen to twenty years after his conversion, and St. Paul's memory may not have been

<sup>a</sup> Zeller, i. 300.

<sup>b</sup> Lange, *Acts*; Gilbert, p. 49.

<sup>c</sup> Baur, i. 110.

<sup>d</sup> Baur, i. 111; McGiffert, p. 165; G. G. Findlay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Paul the Apostle.



infallible. Luke too may have had access to sources much nearer in date to the occurrences.<sup>a</sup>

### ix. 31-xi. 18 and xii

These 'Acts of Peter' were probably derived by Luke from Mark, whose mother's house appears to have been Peter's home at Jerusalem, and who is said to have later travelled with Peter as his interpreter. We know that he and Luke were together at Rome during Paul's imprisonment (Col. iv. 10, 14).<sup>b</sup>

### ix. 31-43

It is impossible to fix with any certainty the date of these occurrences. They may have taken place soon after Peter's return from Samaria (viii. 25), and during Saul's sojourn in Arabia. Otherwise we should expect to find a Christian Church in Caesarea, since Philip went there at that time (viii. 40). The fact that Saul's visit to Jerusalem is recorded earlier may be due to Luke's wish to complete the story of his conversion before resuming the history of Peter.<sup>c</sup>

Luke always chooses his subjects with a definite object, and Peter's tour of visitation appears to be narrated in order to explain how he came to be at Joppa and in the neighbourhood of Caesarea, thus leading up to the account of the conversion of Cornelius, which he felt to be an important point in the history of the development of the Church.<sup>d</sup>

### 31-35

<sup>31</sup> So the Church throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being builded up, and walking in the fear of the Lord; and was filled with the comfort of the Holy Spirit. <sup>32</sup> And it came to pass as Peter went about throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints who dwelt at Lydda. <sup>33</sup> And he found there a certain man named Aeneas, for eight years bedridden, being paralytic. <sup>34</sup> And Peter said to him, Aeneas, Jesus the Christ healeth thee: rise, and make

<sup>a</sup> Giles, p. 322.

<sup>b</sup> Chase, p. 21.

<sup>c</sup> Olshausen, p. 483; Rendall, *Acts*, p. 25.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 330.

for thyself thy bed. And straightway he rose. <sup>35</sup> And all who dwelt at Lydda and in the Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

**31. the Church.** Earlier in the book (v. 11) the word means the Christian community in Jerusalem. By this time there were churches in Judaea (Gal. i. 7), which are here collectively called 'the Church', <sup>a</sup> though these local congregations were perhaps detached members of the Church at Jerusalem rather than separate organizations.

**Galilee.** It is strange that Galilee, which in the Synoptic Gospels is the chief scene of Jesus' ministry, should be mentioned in the Acts here only, and never by St. Paul in his letters, as a centre of Christian life. But in some passages, where we should expect Galilee to be mentioned, it may be included in 'Judaea'. <sup>b</sup>

**had peace.** The context seems at first sight to suggest that Luke connected this 'peace' with the departure of Saul. But this verse belongs, not to what precedes, but to what follows, being introductory to the account of Peter's work. The cause of the peace is to be found elsewhere, in events that were happening in the pagan world. In A.D. 39 Caligula ordered his statue to be set up in the Temple at Jerusalem, and the anger of the Jews against him diverted their attention from the Christians. When, after his murder and the accession of Claudius, Herod Agrippa became king, the persecution was at once resumed. <sup>c</sup>

**32. Lydda,** see on viii. 40. Mnason (xxi. 16) may have lived at Lydda, which would be a convenient stopping-place on the two days' journey from Caesarea to Jerusalem. If he was Luke's informant for this narrative, it may account for his name being recorded. <sup>d</sup>

**33. Aenēas.** The name is a corrupt form of the classical Aenēas, and it is interesting to remember that this coast was the scene of many old Greek legends, such as that of Perseus and Andromeda. <sup>e</sup> It is found as the name of a Jew in Josephus <sup>f</sup>; but the description of him as 'a certain man' suggests that he was not a Christian.

**34. Jesus the Christ healeth thee.** This, like the following miracle, is obviously moulded on a miracle of Jesus (Matt. ix. 6)—is

<sup>a</sup> Simcox, p. 58.

<sup>b</sup> Geikie, p. 7; J. Thomas, p. 73; Harnack, *Acts*, p. 73.

<sup>c</sup> J. Robertson, p. 93; Farrar, i. 243; Norris, p. 49; Stokes, ii. 94.

<sup>d</sup> Ramsay, *Expositor*, April, 1909.

<sup>e</sup> Benson, p. 229.

<sup>f</sup> *Antiq.* XIV. ii. 22.

an intentional imitation, with significant differences.<sup>a</sup> Peter takes no part of the honour to himself; he does not say in his own name to the paralytic the imperial 'Rise', as Jesus did. But what a vivid belief these early Christians had! It required no small faith in the reality of the Lord's presence and of His power to heal, to say 'Rise' to a man who had been bedridden for eight years.<sup>b</sup>

**make for thyself thy bed.** The man on whom Christ performed His miracle was out of his house, and the command, 'Take up thy bed and go unto thy house' was to show the completeness of the cure. The command here is given with the same object, but the man was in his house bedridden, and he is told to fold up his bedding and put it away.<sup>c</sup>

35. **the Sharon.** The coast-plain between Joppa and Carmel.

**they turned to the Lord.** If Philip had prepared the soil, there may have been many at Lydda who were inclined, before Peter's visit, to accept Jesus as the Messiah.

### 36-43

<sup>36</sup> Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple called Tabitha (the same as the Greek name Dorcas): this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. <sup>37</sup> And it came to pass in those days that she fell sick and died: and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper chamber. <sup>38</sup> And as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, entreating him, Delay not to come on to us. <sup>39</sup> And Peter rose and went with them. And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and displaying tunics and cloaks which Dorcas was accustomed to make while she was with them. <sup>40</sup> But Peter, putting them all forth, kneeled down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, Tabitha, rise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up. <sup>41</sup> And he gave her his hand, and raised her up;

<sup>a</sup> Maclaren, i. 288.

<sup>b</sup> Burrell, p. 125.

<sup>c</sup> Kitto, p. 18.

and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. <sup>42</sup> And it became known throughout all Joppa; and many believed on the Lord. <sup>43</sup> And it came to pass that he abode many days in Joppa with one Simon, a tanner.

**36. Joppa**, the port of Jerusalem.

**a certain disciple.** The feminine form here employed is nowhere found in classical Greek; and the word is not found because the thing was not known. Women were the toys or the slaves of men until the Gospel made them equals.<sup>a</sup>

**Tabitha.** This Aramaic word, like its Greek equivalent Dorcas, means 'Gazelle'. Since nothing is said of a husband or of widowhood, she was probably unmarried. Though in a position to give alms, she was not content with this, but actively worked for others. Thus she is not only the first woman mentioned by name in the Christian Church, but in her first came the recognition of woman's work. While Jesus was on earth, woman had found her sphere in ministering to His needs (Luke viii. 3): now that He was no longer visibly present, she found it in ministering to Him in the persons of His poor.<sup>b</sup>

**38. nigh.** About 12 miles.

**sent two men.** The messengers must have been sent before the death took place. No Apostle had yet raised the dead, so that no hope of that kind could be the reason for summoning Peter. But they had heard of the cure of Aeneas, and they hoped that Peter might again exercise the same healing power. Hence they must have been keenly disappointed when Dorcas died before his arrival.<sup>c</sup>

Ramsay thinks<sup>d</sup> that Dorcas was not really dead, though the disciples may have believed her to be so; and that the account as we have it has legendary accretions. It may be so. A real case of resurrection from death would have created an excitement throughout the country of which the narrative gives no evidence. We are told of the deep impression caused by the raising of Lazarus (John xii. 9, 18, 19), but nothing of the kind is mentioned here.

As an illustration of the rapidity with which accretions grew round

<sup>a</sup> J. C. Jones, p. 221.

<sup>b</sup> Arnot, p. 239; Baumgarten, i. 254; V. H. Stanton, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Dorcas; Dykes, p. 339.

<sup>c</sup> West, p. 297.

<sup>d</sup> *Expositor*, April, 1909.

the early Christian narratives, it may be pointed out that, whereas Mark (xi. 20) says that the disciples did not notice the withering of the fig-tree till the following day, Matthew (xxi. 19) enhances the marvel by saying that the withering took place at once, and was immediately noticed by the disciples. So too the dumb demoniac of Luke (xi. 14) becomes blind also in Matthew (xii. 22). And the 'about four thousand' of Mark (viii. 9) becomes in Matthew (xv. 38) 'four thousand men, besides women and children.'<sup>a</sup>

But if this narrative has received some embellishment from legend, we may none the less, as in the subsequent story of Peter's liberation from prison (xii. 6 seq.), admit the beauty and instruction which are to be found in the form in which Luke has given it.

**39. all the widows.** Philip was one of the Seven, the reason for whose appointment was the care of the needy widows. It looks as if, in organizing the Christian society at Joppa, he had remembered his own special work.<sup>b</sup>

**was accustomed to make.** Dorcas, being dead, yet speaketh. Societies, formed to continue her work, bear her name.<sup>c</sup>

**40. putting them all forth.** Evidently he recalled the scene at the raising of Jairus' daughter, of which he had been one of the three privileged spectators (Mark v. 37); and, consciously or unconsciously, followed the example which to him was so sacred. Since Luke's information was probably derived from Peter through Mark, it is interesting to note that the account tallies more closely with the narrative of Jesus' miracle as given in Mark's Gospel, which is usually thought to be derived from Peter, than as given in Luke's. In both cases the room was crowded with mourners; and in both the worker required the absence of all distraction, and put them forth. Some battles must be fought in public: others, and the sternest of all, in solitude.<sup>d</sup>

**and prayed.** As the Old Testament prophet had done in a like case (1 Kings xvii. 20). There was nothing here of the self-confident wonder-worker, but only a humble man, putting himself in the hands of his Divine Master.<sup>e</sup>

**and turning to the body.** Now was the supreme test of his faith. Only splendid faith, or insanity, could say to a lifeless corpse, 'Rise.'

<sup>a</sup> Plummer, *St. Matthew*, pp. 291, 175, 220.

<sup>b</sup> Parker, i. 243.

<sup>c</sup> Arnot, p. 242.

<sup>d</sup> Birks, p. 194; Vaughan, ii. 45; Maclaren, i. 289.

<sup>e</sup> Burrell, p. 129.



**Tabitha, rise.** Mark gives in his Gospel (v. 41) the Aramaic words employed by Jesus, 'Talitha, cumi.' If Peter spoke in Aramaic, he used the identical words, with the exception of a single letter, 'Tabitha, cumi.'

**41. gave her his hand.** Jesus had taken the damsel by the hand before He spoke the word of power. Peter waited till Dorcas had shown signs of life by sitting up. He did not use any act which might suggest power on his own part to restore the dead. Both in what he did, and in what he did not do, there is a marked difference between the Master's original and the servant's copy.<sup>a</sup>

It is instructive to compare the account of this miracle with that of the restoration of Eutychus by St. Paul (xx. 10). Peter, in a sudden emergency, fell back on his Lord's example. Paul, not having seen the miracle of Jesus, recalled the story of the old Prophet (1 Kings xvii. 21), with which he had been familiar from his boyhood.<sup>b</sup>

**43. many days.** Probably he found a promising field open for his labours as a result of this miracle.

**a tanner.** The contact with unclean hides made the Jews regard this trade with abhorrence. It was a ground for divorce, if a Jewess discovered after marriage that her husband was a tanner. It was a saying of the Rabbis, 'It is impossible for the world to do without tanners; but woe to him who is a tanner.' That Peter should lodge with such a man shows that he must already have abandoned something of Jewish scrupulosity. The revelation that in the new Kingdom God had made all things clean fitly came to him in a tanner's house. The lodging with the tanner was a step on the road to the eating with the Gentile. So it is that in the Providence of God the things that seem to us impossible to-day become the commonplaces of to-morrow.<sup>c</sup>

## CHAPTER X

THIS chapter marks a fresh advance in the development of Christianity. The chief practical question in its early years was the terms on which the Gentiles were to be admitted to the Church. Up to this time the Apostles had limited their ministry to the circumcised. Whether the conversion of the Ethiopian by the Evangelist Philip preceded that of Cornelius is doubtful. Though

<sup>a</sup> Dodd, p. 135; Maclaren, i. 293.

<sup>b</sup> Birks, p. 196.

<sup>c</sup> Farrar, i. 264; Benson, p. 232; Parker, i. 251.

it is narrated earlier, the order of events in the first ten chapters is full of uncertainty. But if it occurred earlier, it was probably not widely known, and had not the influence of this conversion upon the opinion of the Church.<sup>a</sup>

## I-8

<sup>1</sup> Now a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the Italian cohort,—<sup>2</sup> a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave large alms to the people, and prayed to God continually—<sup>3</sup> saw in a vision plainly, as it were about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying to him, Cornelius. <sup>4</sup> And he, fastening his eyes upon him and being affrighted, said, What is it, sir? And he said to him, Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God. <sup>5</sup> And now send men to Joppa and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter; <sup>6</sup> he is lodging with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea shore. <sup>7</sup> And when the angel who spake to him had departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that were in constant attendance on him; <sup>8</sup> and having fully instructed them sent them to Joppa.

1. **Caesarea.** The contrasts are instructive—Joppa, the oldest town in Palestine, and the modern Caesarea, built by Herod and named Sebaste after Augustus; the Galilean fisherman, lodging with a tanner, and the Roman officer, quartered at the seat of government; a member of the subject race, whom the Romans despised, and a representative of that army which, as the emblem of worldly power, was loathed by every true Jew.<sup>b</sup>

**Cornelius.** He may have been a scion of the noble Cornelian house; or, since Sulla enfranchised ten thousand slaves and gave them all the name of Cornelius, a descendant of some freedman of that family. Apparently he was not at Caesarea merely for a short time on military duty, but was resident there, since his kinsfolk were

<sup>a</sup> Thomas, *Acts*; Chase, p. 68.

<sup>b</sup> Maclaren, i. 296 seq.

with him (ver. 24, but see note there); and from his large almsgiving he seems to have been a man of means.<sup>a</sup>

**a centurion.** Five centurions are mentioned in the New Testament, and they leave on the mind a favourable impression of the high character of Roman officers. The centurion of Capernaum showed a faith which moved Jesus to wonder (Luke vii. 9). The temper of the centurion at the Crucifixion (Luke xxiii. 47) was in marked contrast with that of the crowd round the Cross. The centurion in the castle of Antonia (xxiii. 17) showed a courteous readiness to oblige his prisoner. Julius behaved to Paul on the voyage with a kindness that was more than courtesy (xxvii. 3, 43). And Cornelius was a man whose life might put to shame many professing Christians, as was fitting in one who not only was the captain of a hundred Roman soldiers, but was destined to be the leader of many millions gathered out of all nations.<sup>b</sup>

**Italian cohort.** Special names were not given to legionary cohorts, so that this cohort was not attached to a legion. It was probably formed of Italian volunteers, who were willing to serve in any part of the Empire.<sup>c</sup> An epitaph, circa A.D. 70, found at Carnuntum on the Danube, commemorates one Proculus, a soldier of the Second Italian Cohort, engaged on detached service from the Syrian army. Thus there may well have been an Italian cohort in Syria thirty years earlier.<sup>d</sup> It was important that the Procurator should have at Caesarea troops whose loyalty he could trust, and not be entirely dependent on levies raised in the province.

**2. a devout man.** Some have thought that he was a proselyte, but there is no trace of this, and a Roman officer could scarcely have openly professed a religion which set aside all the other religions and forms of worship which prevailed in the Empire.<sup>e</sup> Moreover, we hear of the admission of proselytes to the Church long before (vi. 5). Cornelius was one of those Gentiles who were attracted by the monotheism and pure morality of the Jews and often attended their synagogues, but were not proselytes in a strict sense. (The word is used loosely in xiii. 43, for it obviously means the same men who are described in xiii. 16 and 26 as those 'that fear God'.<sup>f</sup>) Luke nowhere says that he was more than a good and devout man whom God was leading, through his obedience as a soldier, his care for the

<sup>a</sup> J. Thomas, p. 56.

<sup>b</sup> Howson, *Companions*, p. 168 seq.; Gurney, p. 183.

<sup>c</sup> Buss, p. 344.

<sup>d</sup> Ramsay, *Expositor*, v. iv. 124.

<sup>e</sup> Giles, p. 211.

<sup>f</sup> F. C. Porter, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Proselyte.

poor, and his groping after light, to fuller knowledge.<sup>a</sup> At the same time, he may have heard something of the Christian teaching of Philip (ix. 40); and the remarkable fullness of the narrative may be due to information gathered by Luke when subsequently (xxi. 8) staying with Philip.

**with all his house.** The domestic side of his religion is strongly marked. The use of the humane word 'servants' (ver. 7) rather than 'slaves' shows him to have been a considerate master, and he was anxious (xi. 14) that they should share the help which he desired for himself.

**the people.** The Greek word shows that the Jewish people is meant. Probably such almsgiving was a rare act on the part of a Roman living among another race.

**and prayed.** Almsgiving and prayer—he displays the cardinal points of popular Hebrew piety (Matt. vi. 1 seq.). Indeed, fear of God, love of his neighbour, and prayer imply a religious condition in advance of many who are born to a knowledge of the Gospel. If any one might be justified apart from faith in Christ, here surely was the man. Yet the Word of God treats him as a sinner needing to be saved by grace.<sup>b</sup>

3. **as it were.** The hour is part of the vision.

**an angel of God.** The expression is a mark of authenticity, since a Jew would have been likely to use the usual phrase, 'an angel of the Lord.'<sup>c</sup>

**and saying.** The importance which Luke attached to this event is shown by his double repetition both of this vision (ver. 30 and xi. 13) and of the vision to Peter (verses 10 and 28, xi. 5).<sup>d</sup>

The parallelism between the accounts of this conversion and that of Saul is remarkable (see on ix. 10). In both we have the same evidence of the interest of heaven in the affairs of earth shown in the knowledge of names and in the intimate description of the respective abodes. Both men are prepared by visions for the coming of the instructor. Both instructors are prepared by visions, and are at first reluctant. Both are met by reiterated commands and then obey.<sup>e</sup>

4. **Thy prayers.** It is clear that Cornelius was in great religious anxiety; and, longing for light, had carried his difficulties to God. This is shown by the subsequent report (ver. 32) of what was said to him by the angel—'thy prayer was heard . . . send *therefore* to

<sup>a</sup> Maurice, p. 149.

<sup>b</sup> Arnot, p. 253; Vaughan, ii. 69.

<sup>c</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Thomas, *Acts*, p. 171.

<sup>e</sup> Norris, p. 51.

Joppa.' So it pleased God long ago to answer one faithful man's prayer. But the lesson is for all time. It teaches (i) that the way to get light is to act up to that we have—'unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness' (Ps. cxii. 4); (ii) that prayer is needed, as well as inquiry, in the search for truth.<sup>a</sup>

**are gone up.** The metaphor is from incense (Rev. v. 8).

5. **fetch one Simon.** The angel is the messenger, but a brother man is the minister. Angels, who have not fallen, cannot preach. The man, who had disowned his Lord and been forgiven, can tell how salvation may be won. The treasure is put 'in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of men' (2 Cor. iv. 7).<sup>b</sup>

**who is surnamed Peter.** This addition occurs four times in the narrative (verses 18, 32, xi. 13) to distinguish him from the Simon with whom he was staying.

6. **a tanner.** This fact might reassure Cornelius by showing that Peter was not a narrow illiberal Jew, but one who had learnt that what defiled a man was not his occupation but his thoughts.<sup>c</sup>

**by the sea shore.** The Jews did not allow tanners to reside in cities, and their occupation obliged them to live near water.<sup>d</sup> Possibly Peter may have lodged here in order to support himself by his old occupation as a fisherman. 'Many days' (ix. 43) usually in the Acts denotes a period of some length.

7. **a devout soldier.** The devout captain has a devout soldier as his constant attendant. The soldier was sent as an escort for the protection of the servants.

## 9-16

<sup>9</sup> Now on the morrow, as they were on their journey and drew nigh to the city, Peter went up upon the housetop about the sixth hour to pray : <sup>10</sup> and he became hungry and was minded to eat ; but, while they were making ready, he fell into a trance ; <sup>11</sup> and he beheld the heaven opened and a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth : <sup>12</sup> wherein were all the fourfooted beasts and

<sup>a</sup> Gurney, p. 186 ; Taylor, *Peter*, p. 268 ; Binney, p. 121.

<sup>b</sup> Arnot, p. 249 ; Dick, p. 183.

<sup>c</sup> Stifler, p. 84 ; Lewis, p. 246.

<sup>d</sup> Hackett, *Acts*.



creeping things of the earth and fowls of the heaven.  
<sup>13</sup> And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. <sup>14</sup> But Peter said, By no means, Lord; for never have I eaten anything that is common or unclean.  
<sup>15</sup> And a voice came to him again a second time, What God maketh clean, make not thou common. <sup>16</sup> And this was done thrice; and straightway the vessel was taken up into heaven.

9. **to pray.** On the principle that we may discover from the answer to prayer what the subject of prayer had been, it may be assumed that Peter had been praying for light on a question which must have been for some time in his mind—the relation of the Christian Jews to the Gentiles. He was living in a half-Gentile city, and its mixed population would bring home to him the urgency of the problem. Joppa was a singularly appropriate town for the coming revelation. If in Caesarea the West was looking to the East, in Joppa the East looked forth to the West. Before Peter's eyes was the sea, over which the Gospel was to travel to the isles of which prophecy had told that they should 'wait for the Lord' (Isa. xlii. 4). As he put off in his fisherman's boat he would recall how the Lord had said that he was to be 'a fisher of men' (Mark i. 17). And was it not from Joppa that Jonah had sailed? And so his thoughts would turn to Nineveh, the heathen city, where was no circumcision, no Jewish Law, no temple of Jehovah, and yet the mercy of God had rested on it. How was it to be with the heathen of his own day? So he may have been musing, when on the roof at Joppa he knelt in prayer, waiting for the answer to his thoughts.<sup>a</sup>

10. **became hungry.** It may have been a Tuesday or Thursday, which were fast days with the pious Jew: cf. 'I fast twice in the week' (Luke xviii. 12). His hunger gave shape to the imagery under which he was to learn the all-important lesson. In God's revelations to man the human element plays its part. The natural and the supernatural border closely on one another, with no definable limits; all that can be said is that man stands always on the brink of the unseen world, and that the curtain may be sometimes lifted.<sup>b</sup>

11. **a great sheet.** The Lord, who on earth had revealed the

<sup>a</sup> Arnot, p. 250; Birks, p. 207; Maclaren, i. 300; Chase, p. 77; Stanley, p. 93.

<sup>b</sup> Noble, p. 215.

mysteries of heaven to His disciples in parables, reveals the truth to Peter in a similar way. The Kingdom was to consist of men of every race and every type from the 'four corners' of the earth (Isa. xi. 12).

**12. wherein were all.** The sheet containing clean and unclean creatures symbolized the world containing Jews and Gentiles; its descent from heaven the Divine origin of both; its ascent again to heaven their common destiny. God had 'made of one every nation of men' (xvii. 26). Differing in colour; differing in physical, mental, and moral capacity; as dissimilar as the diverse tribes of the irrational world—all alike were children of the One Father; and, sanctified by Him, none could be common or unclean.<sup>a</sup>

**14. By no means, Lord.** It is, as the Greek shows, a protest, not a refusal.<sup>b</sup> And how the Peter of the Gospel starts up before us in this quick rejoinder! Even in trance the characteristics of the man remain unchanged. In the old impulsive fashion he dares to argue with his Lord, as he had done of old. 'Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee!' (Matt. xvi. 22). 'Thou shalt never wash my feet' (John xiii. 8).<sup>c</sup>

**never have I.** We are reminded of the remonstrance of Ezekiel, when he was commanded from heaven to eat loathsome food. 'Ah, Lord God, behold, my soul hath not been polluted; for from my youth up till now have I not eaten of that which died of itself' (Ezek. iv. 14). Similarly the Books of the Maccabees tell of the privations and death to which the Jews submitted rather than pollute themselves with forbidden food.<sup>d</sup> It must be remembered that the Jew felt, by long heredity, a physical repulsion from unclean meats.

Peter's naïve reason for protesting—that he has never yet done what he is now bidden to do—is charmingly illogical and human. God tells him to do a new thing, and he demurs because it is new. He does not rise to the thought that a custom might have been instituted by God, and yet be temporary—that there might be progressiveness in the Divine revelation.<sup>e</sup> This may have been narrow on his part, but it was very natural. He had been taught from his childhood to distinguish between clean and unclean animals. The distinction had been part of the Divine education of the Jews. Their separation from other races was only partially effected by circumcision, since that rite was practised by the Arabians also, the descendants of

<sup>a</sup> Thomas, *Acts*, p. 173.

<sup>b</sup> Page, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> Howson, *Peter*, p. 104; Birks, p. 208; Maclaren, i. 302; Benson, p. 252; Farrar, i. 273.

<sup>d</sup> Chase, p. 79; Macduff, *Peter*, p. 460. <sup>e</sup> Maclaren, i. 301; Burrell, p. 139.

Ishmael. A more complete severance was effected by the laws respecting food; and such severance was assigned in the sacred books as the object of those laws (Levit. xx. 24-26). Thus to give up these distinctions must have seemed to Peter like surrendering his faith in the Divinely appointed destiny of his race.<sup>a</sup>

15. **maketh clean**, that is, by inviting thee to eat them.

Under the old dispensation it was not that creation was clean, and certain portions set apart as unclean. The rule was uncleanness, and cleanness the exception. In a world under a curse the taint was held to affect everything, and only by exception were certain men and certain animals raised above the general defilement. Now the ruin of the fall had been repaired by the Incarnation of God in humanity—not in the Jew only, but in all men. Sin alone separates man from God: uncleanness is not a physical, but a moral taint.<sup>b</sup>

It was Peter (Matt. xv. 15) who had asked the Lord to explain the parable in which He had denounced a religion which was based on a formal observance of externals. Mark alone adds (vii. 19), 'This he said, making all meats clean' (where the Greek word is the same as that used here). Can we doubt that Mark derived those words from Peter, and that they are Peter's interpretation of our Lord's explanation in the light of this subsequent revelation?<sup>c</sup>

16. **thrice**. The voice, not the vision, was thrice repeated. So much iteration was needed to drive home the lesson.

### 17-23

<sup>17</sup> Now while Peter was much perplexed in himself what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men which were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood before the gate, <sup>18</sup> and calling, asked whether Simon which was surnamed Peter were lodging there. <sup>19</sup> And while Peter pondered on the vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men seek thee. <sup>20</sup> But rise, and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting that I have sent them. <sup>21</sup> And Peter went down to the men and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek; what is the cause wherefore ye are

<sup>a</sup> Maurice, p. 153; Dick, p. 185.

<sup>b</sup> Pressensé, p. 55; Alford, *Homilies*, p. 321; Plumptre, *Acts*,

<sup>c</sup> Howson, *Hor. Pet.*, p. 38.

come? <sup>22</sup> And they said, Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous man and one who feareth God, and is so reported of by all the nation of the Jews, was instructed by a holy angel to send for thee to his house and to hear words from thee. <sup>23</sup> So he invited them in and lodged them. And on the morrow he rose and departed with them, and certain of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

**17. perplexed in himself.** The primary meaning of the vision was obvious. Peter must have understood that the law with regard to clean and unclean meats was repealed. But when he asked himself whether more were involved in the sweeping away of that distinction—whether it extended to persons as well as to things—the answer was not so clear. The object of that distinction had been to separate the Jews from other nations. Had the purpose of God in that separation been now fulfilled, and was He about to extend the privileges of the chosen people to all? We have no difficulty in answering. But it was very hard for a Jew to imagine that the excluded and despised Gentile was to be put upon an equality with himself. It was so vast a change from the conditions which had existed for ages, and which had been originally established by the Divine command, that to Peter it was almost inconceivable.<sup>a</sup>

**the men.** Evidently Cornelius had enjoined haste. They had travelled thirty miles on foot since the preceding afternoon, and were not resting during the noonday heat.

**19. the Spirit said.** Peter recognized the coincidence of the vision and the inquiry of these men as the Divine voice calling him.

**20. I have sent them.** Cornelius was the human instrument who had sent them, but behind Cornelius was the Spirit of God.

**21. went down.** Descending by the outside staircase from the roof, without passing through the house, he met and admitted (ver. 23) the men.

**22. so reported of.** The words recall the similar description of that other centurion, whom the Lord had so highly commended (Luke vii. 4, 5). And Peter had special cause to remember that centurion, because the healing of his servant occurred immediately before the healing of his own wife's mother (Matt. viii. 13).<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> West, p. 312; Dick, p. 186.

<sup>b</sup> Howson, *Hor. Pet.*, p. 32.

23. **on the morrow.** A grave crisis was impending, and he, no doubt, spent the night in thought and prayer.<sup>a</sup>

**certain of the brethren.** They were six in number (xi. 12). Peter's prudence, so unlike his usual impulsiveness, in wishing to have the presence of Jewish witnesses, who might give a faithful report of anything which might occur, shows that he felt that the vision and the Divine summons to Caesarea might be the precursors of some momentous event in the history of the Church.<sup>b</sup>

## 24-33

<sup>24</sup> And the day following they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his kinsmen and his intimate friends. <sup>25</sup> And when Peter came, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. <sup>26</sup> But Peter raised him up, saying, Stand up : I myself also am a man. <sup>27</sup> And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many come together : <sup>28</sup> and he said to them, Ye yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man that is a Jew to associate with or visit one of another nation ; but God hath showed me that I should call no man common or unclean. <sup>29</sup> Wherefore also I came without gainsaying when I was sent for. I ask therefore with what intent ye sent for me. <sup>30</sup> And Cornelius said, Four days ago, reckoning up to this hour, I was praying at the ninth hour in my house. And behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, <sup>31</sup> and said, Cornelius, thy prayer was heard, and thine alms were had in remembrance in the sight of God. <sup>32</sup> Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, who is surnamed Peter ; he is lodging in the house of Simon a tanner by the sea shore. <sup>33</sup> Forthwith therefore I sent to thee ; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee by the Lord.

<sup>a</sup> Vaughan, ii. 79.

<sup>b</sup> Dykes, p. 367 ; Taylor, *Peter*, p. 262.



**24. having called together.** His house had perhaps been before used as a meeting-place for serious Gentile inquirers who shared his religious views.<sup>a</sup>

**his kinsmen.** The word may mean, not relations, but fellow countrymen (Rom. ix. 3).

**25. worshipped him.** The Greek word does not necessarily imply religious adoration, any more than the English 'worship' does. (Compare the official use of 'worshipful', and the words in the marriage service, 'with my body I thee worship.') Cornelius was not an idolator and would not have honoured Peter as a god. Nor is it likely that a Roman officer would prostrate himself after the servile manner of Orientals. At the same time, it is clear that he showed a degree of reverence which Peter felt to be greater than was due to any man. It must be remembered that the strict barrier, which confined the adoration of the Jew to God alone, had among Romans been broken down by the belief in demigods and by the worship of the Emperor.

**26. raised him up.** It may be noted, by way of contrast, that Jesus did not refuse a similar homage, when it was offered by this same Peter (Luke v. 8), and by a leper (Matt. viii. 2).

**27. many come together.** A significant indication of the attitude towards religious questions of thoughtful heathens at this period.

**28. Ye yourselves know.** No law of Moses forbade to the Jew all intercourse with Gentiles, but tradition had added this burden as a safeguard against ceremonial defilement. These Gentiles, quartered in a Jewish town, would know the practice of devout Hebrews.<sup>b</sup>

**call no man.** Peter does not say 'no food'. He has grasped the true meaning of the vision. It was meant to show that not merely the distinction between meats was repealed, but also the separation between men, which had been the aim of that distinction. And yet there is a characteristic touch of rugged honesty in his 'God hath showed me'; implying 'I would not otherwise have come'. This combination of protest and obedience finds an exact parallel in his earlier words (Luke v. 5), 'Master, we have toiled all night, and taken nothing; but at thy word I will let down the net.'<sup>c</sup>

**33. to hear all things.** So was the prophecy of Zechariah

<sup>a</sup> Dykes, p. 368.

<sup>b</sup> Dykes, p. 371.

<sup>c</sup> Benson, p. 253; Birks, p. 209.

(viii. 23) fulfilled: 'In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'

## 34-43

<sup>34</sup> And Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no regardor of persons: <sup>35</sup> but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him. <sup>36</sup> Ye know the word which he sent to the children of Israel, preaching glad tidings of peace by Jesus the Christ (he is Lord of all)—the thing which John proclaimed throughout all Judaea beginning from Galilee about Jesus of Nazareth after the baptism<sup>a</sup>—<sup>38</sup> that God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good and healing all that were under the tyranny of the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup> And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem—whom they even killed, hanging him on a tree. <sup>40</sup> Him God raised the third day, and manifested him openly, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people, but to witnesses who had been chosen before by God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> And he charged us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is he who hath been ordained by God to be the judge of living and dead. <sup>43</sup> To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him receiveth remission of sins.

**34. no regardor of persons.** This was an old saying in Israel (Deut. x. 17, 2 Sam. xiv. 14, 2 Chron. xix. 7). And Jesus had said (John vi. 45), 'It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God'; and had declared (John x. 16) that He had 'other

<sup>a</sup> The Greek text of verses 36 and 37 is dislocated.

sheep which are not of this fold'. Thus this was in one sense no new truth to Peter; but it was only now that he fully understood all that was involved in it.<sup>a</sup>

**35. in every nation.** Peter does not say that a man's belief is immaterial, provided his life be right; but that his nationality matters nothing. Salvation is not a matter of race. Hitherto he had thought that only a circumcised Jew could be acceptable to God. Now he sees that the essential thing is not whether a man be Jew or Gentile, but whether he be a worker of righteousness.<sup>b</sup>

**acceptable.** That is, eligible for the Kingdom—a proper person for the work of conversion. The problem as to God's acceptance of men who, like Cornelius, walk after such light as they have, without hearing of Jesus Christ, is not touched here.<sup>c</sup>

**36. Ye know.** He appeals to facts which, as having happened but a few years before and in their own neighbourhood, were already known to his audience.<sup>d</sup>

**40. God raised.** To these Gentiles he does not appeal to the evidence of prophecy, as he had done (ch. ii) in addressing Jews, but to the evidence of living witnesses of the fact.

**41. not to all the people.** From the days of Celsus it has been argued that the evidence for the Resurrection would have been stronger if it had been offered to all, even to sceptics. The answer usually made is (i) that the Jews had received in Jesus' miracles and teaching sufficient evidence of His Divinity and had rejected it, and were therefore denied more convincing proof; (ii) that identification of the Risen Jesus by those who knew His Person intimately was alone trustworthy. It is, however, better, and more profoundly true, to say<sup>e</sup> that it was not possible for the Risen Lord to come again into contact with the world and its sin. To have done so would have been to renew His Passion after the cup had been drained and 'it was finished'.

**did eat and drink with him.** Though it is not expressly stated, either here, or in Luke xxiv. 30, or in John xxi. 13, that the Risen Lord Himself ate and drank, the words in all three passages naturally suggest that He did, and in Luke xxiv. 42 it is definitely stated that He did. It is difficult to avoid thinking that the fact that He was present when the disciples ate was at an early date wrongly taken to

<sup>a</sup> Fraser, p. 79; G. Milligan, *Men of the New Testament*, p. 281.

<sup>b</sup> Vaughan, ii. 83; Lewis, p. 259.

<sup>c</sup> Dykes, p. 374.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 375.

<sup>e</sup> Milligan, *The Resurrection*, p. 33.

mean that He joined them in eating. Such a misunderstanding may explain the early mistranslation of i. 4 (margin). For eating and drinking imply a physical body with corporeal needs, and the Lord's Resurrection Body was a spiritual body, invisible to the natural eye, except when it was endowed with spiritual vision. He appeared suddenly to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, and as suddenly vanished from their sight. The veil was lifted for a while, and they saw Him; then it fell, and they saw only what was visible to their natural eye. So on the day of the Ascension, as He passed with the Eleven through the city on the way to Olivet, none marvelled. To the Eleven only was He visible: the people, though they saw the Eleven, did not see the Form in their midst.<sup>a</sup>

42. **the judge.** To these Gentiles he preaches Jesus, not as the Messiah—that they would not have understood—but as the Judge of all men.

43. **every one that believeth.** To his hearers, who were familiar with the demands made on proselytes by Judaism, it must have been an intense relief to hear that they need not submit to circumcision in order to enter the new Society.

#### 44-48

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the word. 45 And the Jewish believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because that on the Gentiles also the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid the water that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? 48 And he commanded that they should be baptized in the name of Jesus the Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

44. **While Peter.** He was interrupted (xi. 15) by a wondrous thing. The Spirit of God, as with a Divine impatience, set aside both messenger and message, and fell on these uncircumcised. As twice before, the commencement of a new stage in the progress of

<sup>a</sup> D. Smith, *In the Days of His Flesh*, p. 524.

the Gospel is signalized by the outpouring of the Spirit—on Jews (ii. 4), on Samaritans (viii. 17), and now on Gentiles.<sup>a</sup>

45. **the Jewish believers.** The six Jewish Christians who had accompanied Peter from Joppa.

**were amazed.** The word is significant of their ingrained prejudices.

**on the Gentiles.** The article implies that, for the moment at least, they recognized a principle in the event.<sup>b</sup>

46. **speak with tongues.** It was the Gentile Pentecost, marked by the same ecstatic utterance. Probably nothing short of this visible manifestation would have convinced them that God was indeed claiming these Gentiles as His own. Unless such extraordinary sign had been given, Peter himself might have hesitated to admit them to baptism; and the Church at Jerusalem would certainly not have recognized the propriety of his action.<sup>c</sup>

47. **Can any man forbid.** The baptism of the Spirit had preceded the baptism of water. Therefore the outward and visible sign could not rightly be withheld from those who had so manifestly received the inward and spiritual grace. As in the case of Saul (ix. 18), though the gift of God had flowed through another channel than the appointed outward form, that fact did not supersede the duty of using the ordained form.

48. **he commanded.** Like St. Paul (1 Cor. i. 14), he abstained from himself administering the rite, as Jesus also had done (John iv. 2). The object may have been to emphasize the fact that the rite was the essential thing, and not the dispenser of the rite. But on this occasion Peter may have preferred to use the ministry of the brethren who accompanied him, as a proof of their concurrence.<sup>d</sup>

**Then prayed they him.** The subsequent charge of having 'eaten with them' (xi. 3) shows that Peter consented.

## CHAPTER XI

### I-18

<sup>1</sup> Now the Apostles and the brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles also had received the

<sup>a</sup> Pierson, p. 86; F. H. Chase, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Simon Peter.

<sup>b</sup> Baumgarten, i. 280.

<sup>c</sup> Maurice, p. 165; Kitto, p. 205.

<sup>d</sup> Macduff, *Peter*, p. 469; Kitto, p. 206.



word of God. <sup>2</sup> And when Peter went up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision questioned with him, <sup>3</sup> saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. <sup>4</sup> And Peter began and set forth the matter to them in order, saying, <sup>5</sup> I was in the city of Joppa, praying : and in a trance I saw a vision—a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners, and it came even to me : <sup>6</sup> upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw the fourfooted beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and fowls of the heaven. <sup>7</sup> And I heard also a voice saying to me, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. <sup>8</sup> But I said, By no means, Lord ; for nothing common or unclean hath ever entered my mouth. <sup>9</sup> But a voice answered a second time out of heaven, What God maketh clean, make not thou common. <sup>10</sup> And this was done thrice ; and all was drawn up again into heaven. <sup>11</sup> And behold, forthwith three men stood before the house in which we were, sent from Caesarea to me. <sup>12</sup> And the Spirit bade me go with them, making no distinction. And these six brethren also accompanied me. And we entered into the man's house ; <sup>13</sup> and he told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, Send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, who is surnamed Peter, <sup>14</sup> who shall speak to thee words whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house. <sup>15</sup> And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. <sup>16</sup> And I remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. <sup>17</sup> If then God gave to them the like gift that he gave to us, because of belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God ? <sup>18</sup> And when they heard these things,

they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted the repentance unto life.

1. **heard.** The rumour reached them from Caesarea, not from Joppa. They had not heard of the vision which led Peter to act as he did. They knew his impulsive character, and may have set down the rash step to his hasty temperament. He appears to have come straight from Caesarea to Jerusalem, evidently feeling the necessity of explaining what had occurred to the Church at headquarters, and bringing his witnesses with him (ver. 12).<sup>a</sup>

2. **they that were of the circumcision.** There is some anachronism in the use of the phrase at this time. When Luke wrote, it denoted either, generally, the whole body of Christian Jews as opposed to Christian Gentiles; or, specially, the Judaizing party. But at this time all the converts had been circumcised. Apparently Luke uses it here to describe, not the whole body of believers, but that section which later became the Judaizers, and he contrasts them with 'the Apostles and brethren'.<sup>b</sup>

**questioned with him.** It is clear that the early Christians did not regard Peter as holding any position of supremacy. The Church was a democracy, in which, while the Apostles exercised the chief authority, the collective assembly claimed the right of private judgment.<sup>c</sup>

3. **didst eat with them.** This was Peter's offence. They had no quarrel with him for preaching to Gentiles—the Scriptures had promised salvation to the heathen; but he had actually been their guest! It was the old complaint which the Pharisees had urged against Jesus—not that He preached to publicans and sinners, but that He ate with them (Mark ii. 16). It is only fair to remember (i) that association at meals means more in the East than it does to us Westerners; (ii) that the meat at a Gentile table had usually formed part of an idol-sacrifice; (iii) that the hated swine's flesh was a favourite dish with the Romans. And before we cast a stone at them, we should ask ourselves whether 'they of the circumcision' are not with us still, ready to limit God's love by saying, 'We must draw the line somewhere.'<sup>d</sup>

4. **set forth the matter.** Peter claims no immunity from criticism

<sup>a</sup> Macduff, *Peter*, p. 471; Dykes, p. 387; Fraser, p. 96.

<sup>b</sup> Dykes, p. 390; Lechler, i. 173; Baumgarten, i. 284.

<sup>c</sup> Stokes, ii. 144.

<sup>d</sup> Stiffler, p. 92; Farrar, i. 274; Parker, i. 260.

on the score of his Apostolic dignity. He applies himself to meet and satisfy their objections.

The following speech bears plain evidence of authenticity. It is no mere repetition of the preceding narrative, but is marked by natural additions. Whoever it was who furnished Luke with the account, Peter must himself be the ultimate source, since it contains details which could be known to him alone—‘It came even to me’ (ver. 5); ‘Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered’ (ver. 6); ‘As I began to speak’ (ver. 15); ‘And I remembered’ (ver. 16). (Compare the similar features in xii. 9 and 11.) And the omissions are equally natural. He passes lightly over the facts which his hearers already knew, and relates in detail the revelation to himself which was probably unknown to them.<sup>a</sup>

**12. these six brethren.** So far the narrative had been of his personal experience resting on his own testimony. He passes to events which his witnesses could corroborate.<sup>b</sup>

**the man’s house.** To unsympathetic hearers he avoids describing Cornelius as a centurion, since the Roman officers were not viewed with favour by the Jews.<sup>c</sup>

**15. as I began.** He gives no account of his preaching. He rests his defence, not on what he said, but on what God did.<sup>d</sup>

**16. I remembered.** He saw in the words of Jesus (i. 5) a significance which he had never seen before. The difference between John’s baptism and that which Jesus promised did not lie in the fact that one was with water, the other with the Spirit; but that one never went beyond the Jews, the other was to be world-wide.<sup>e</sup> It is an encouraging thought that truths imperfectly grasped may lie dormant for years; and then, with growing powers and increasing light, be understood and applied. So St. John writes (xii. 16), ‘These things understood not his disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him.’

**17. because of belief.** The Spirit had fallen on themselves at Pentecost, not because they were Jews and circumcised, but because they believed in Jesus. Peter is anticipating Paul’s teaching (Gal. v. 6), ‘In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith.’<sup>f</sup>

**who was I?** If God treated Gentiles as equal to Jews, Peter

<sup>a</sup> Benson, p. 279; Dykes, p. 393.

<sup>c</sup> Howson, *Hor. Pet.*, p. 81.

<sup>e</sup> Stiffler, p. 94.

<sup>b</sup> Dykes, p. 394.

<sup>d</sup> Thomas, *Acts*, p. 188.

<sup>f</sup> Dykes, p. 394.

would have denied that Divinely attested equality if he had refused the hospitality of a Gentile.<sup>a</sup>

It was by a strange irony that the man who thus defended himself before the brethren at Jerusalem for the offence of eating with Gentiles should years afterwards be arraigned before the brethren at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11) for the opposite offence of refusing to eat with Gentiles.<sup>b</sup>

**18. held their peace, &c.** The words imply a half-grudging acquiescence in what could not be gainsaid. It was the repentance of these 'sinners of the Gentiles' which was in their thoughts rather than missionary zeal and joy. Nor was there any admission of the equal standing of Jew and Gentile in the Christian Society. They did not see in this event any abrogation of the Law. They probably regarded it as wholly exceptional—a manifestation of God's mercy to individuals, like the cleansing of Naaman in the Old Testament; and made no attempt to apply the principle involved by extending their missionary labours to the Gentiles. So the Church at Jerusalem missed its opportunity. If they had had more courage and generosity, the way was open for them to carry the Gospel to fresh fields. But they<sup>c</sup> held back, and Antioch became the metropolis of the wider faith.<sup>c</sup>

For Peter personally this incident settled the principle at issue, as we see from his words at the Conference (xv. 8). But for a large section of the Jewish Church it was no final settlement at all. Ignorance and prejudice are not overcome by a single incident. The Judaizers may have temporarily held their peace, but they soon raised the question again. They were the predominant element in the Church at Jerusalem, and it is likely that Peter's action led to a diminution of his influence. Hitherto he had been the acknowledged leader. A little later we find the position which he had held occupied by James, the Lord's brother, in whom the Judaizers found a more congenial spirit.<sup>d</sup>

## 19-26

<sup>19</sup> Now they who were scattered abroad after the tribulation that ensued on the death of Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to none save Jews only. <sup>20</sup> But there were

<sup>a</sup> Stiffler, p. 95.

<sup>b</sup> Dykes, p. 395.

<sup>c</sup> Chase, p. 80; Rackham, *Acts*; Watson, p. 47.

<sup>d</sup> Lewis, p. 266.

some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake to the Greeks also, preaching the glad tidings of the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup> And the hand of the Lord was with them, and great was the number that believed and turned to the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And the report concerning them came to the ears of the Church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch: <sup>23</sup> who, when he was come and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all to cleave with purpose of heart to the Lord. <sup>24</sup> For he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and a great multitude was added to the Lord. <sup>25</sup> And he departed to Tarsus to seek Saul: <sup>26</sup> and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it was so that even for a whole year they were brought together in the Church, and taught much people; and that in Antioch the disciples first received the name of Christians.

19. **they who were scattered abroad.** Luke takes up the thread that was broken off at viii. 4; and the repetition of the words of that verse suggests that the intervening narratives have been derived from a different authority, and that he is now returning to his former source. That source is almost certainly Antiochean. The association of a city, 'Antioch,' with two countries, 'Phoenicia and Cyprus,' would of itself suggest this conclusion. How far the four movements connected with the names of Samaria, Damascus, Caesarea, and Antioch, all ultimately traceable to the dispersion which followed Stephen's death, were synchronous or successive, it is impossible to say. Though Luke relates the conversion of Cornelius first, the close connexion of this verse with viii. 4 implies that this preaching to Gentiles preceded that by Peter. On the other hand, the way in which the news of the conversions at Antioch was received by the Church at Jerusalem suggests that they must have been subsequent to that of Cornelius.<sup>a</sup>

**to none save Jews only.** These evangelists were probably

<sup>a</sup> Dykes, p. 403; Lechler, i. 117; Kitto, p. 215.



Hebrews who preached to their own countrymen, until the arrival of Hellenist preachers brought about a change.<sup>a</sup>

**20. men of Cyprus and Cyrene.** We are not told the names of the men who began the new departure, to whom the question first presented itself, 'Is this Lord, whom I believe to be the Son of God, *not* a Lord for these Gentiles?'<sup>b</sup> But Lucius of Cyrene (xiii. 1) may have been among the number, and also the proselyte Nicolas (vi. 5), who was one of Stephen's colleagues, and who may have returned to his native city.

**Antioch.** This was the third city of the Empire, second only to Rome and Alexandria. Containing a population of half a million of mixed nationalities, and connected commercially with both East and West, it was specially fitted to be the mother Church of Gentile Christendom.

**to the Greeks also.** Internal evidence proves that the reading 'Hellenists' is wrong, in spite of the MSS. evidence in its favour. It entirely obscures the importance of the announcement made in this verse, which obviously records, not something which had been done long before, but a new advance in the history of Christianity. [The reading 'Hellenists' probably arose thus: the Sinaitic MS. has 'evangelists' by an error of the copyist, who had the next word, 'evangelizing,' running in his head. The scribes of the Vatican and Alexandrian MSS., seeing that 'evangelists' made no sense, corrected it, not to 'Hellenes,' but to 'Hellenists,' which was nearer to it in sound.<sup>c</sup>]

The Gentiles to whom they preached probably belonged to that numerous class who had abandoned the worship of the pagan gods and were seeking food for their religious hunger in the services of the synagogue. Next to Alexandria, Antioch had the most magnificent synagogue in the world. Josephus says that a very large number of proselytes were attracted to it. And owing to the extreme mixture of races at Antioch, Hebrew exclusiveness was likely to be somewhat relaxed. Further, by these Hellenist preachers the heathen would be better known and their natural virtues recognized. What St. Peter did not learn without a vision—to call no man common or unclean—they had learnt unconsciously from their surroundings in an alien land.<sup>d</sup>

Thus at Antioch, as in Samaria, a momentous step was taken by

<sup>a</sup> Eadie, p. 36; Olshausen, p. 500.

<sup>b</sup> Maurice, p. 174.

<sup>c</sup> Norris, p. 136.

<sup>d</sup> Reuss, i. 259; Gilbert, p. 58; J. Thomas, p. 385; Stiffler, p. 98; A. F. W. Blunt, p. 25.

others than the official leaders of the Church. A few large-hearted men, without authority, probably without consciousness of the wide significance of their action, began the process by which a Jewish sect was transformed into a world-wide Church. To us the step seems only natural; but to the Jewish Christians, accustomed to regard all Gentiles as without the range of the covenant blessing, it was a departure of startling boldness. Whether it was deliberately resolved on, or induced by circumstances, Luke does not state, but his narrative clearly shows that he was fully sensible of the importance of the action as inaugurating a new epoch.<sup>a</sup>

**21. the hand of the Lord was with them.** So it was not a mistake. In acting thus without official sanction they had not gone beyond the mind of their Master. The evident blessing on their work justified them. The expression bears witness to the conviction of the author that Christ's active energy was with His servants and was the source of all their success.<sup>b</sup>

**turned to the Lord.** It is clearly implied that these Greeks did not first become proselytes to the Law and submit to circumcision.<sup>c</sup>

**22. the report.** We do not know how soon after Stephen's death this work began, or how long it had continued before it attracted the attention of the Church at Jerusalem. But the silence as to any controversy makes it likely that the decision in the case of Cornelius had been already given. None the less, the news probably caused some anxiety. The Jewish Christians, even if they did not disapprove, must have been startled. These conversions were clearly the beginning of a vast change in the character of the Church. They called, at any rate, for careful investigation. The inference, however, from the choice of Barnabas, and from his subsequent action, would be that those who sent him were anxious to show sympathy with the movement and to encourage the new converts.<sup>d</sup>

**Barnabas.** The choice of commissioner was a wise one. That his introduction had been regarded as sufficient voucher for Saul's discipleship shows that he was high in the confidence of the Church at Jerusalem: and this is further indicated by the fact that he was now sent alone (contrast with viii. 14) on a mission of such responsibility. As a Cypriote, he would also command the confidence of his countrymen who had been leaders in the new departure, and may even have been a personal friend of some of them; while, as a

<sup>a</sup> Briggs, p. 17; Maclaren, i. 356.

<sup>b</sup> Maurice, p. 174; Dykes, p. 406; Maclaren, i. 322.

<sup>c</sup> Weizsäcker, i. 106.

<sup>d</sup> Purves, p. 102; Simcox, p. 56; Lechler, i. 190.

Levite, he would be able to appreciate Hebrew prejudices. Further, as a Hellenist, he had qualifications which none of the Twelve possessed, being prepared by his training not only to sympathize with the movement, but to understand its importance. But a yet stronger qualification lay in his character, which is beautifully revealed in the sequel.<sup>a</sup>

**as far as Antioch.** The expression implies that he was directed to visit the various places where the Gospel had been preached by the evangelists who were now at Antioch.<sup>b</sup>

**23. was glad.** Here we catch the key-note of the whole narrative. A smaller man would have raised difficulties as to circumcision or baptism. It was enough for Barnabas that the seal of God's blessing was on the work. When he marked the number of converts and their changed lives, he raised no question, made no attempt to exact conformity to Jewish law, but ascribed what he saw to the grace of God, and rejoiced that the Gospel could achieve such conquests in one of the strongholds of heathenism.<sup>c</sup>

**exhorted them all.** The first enthusiasm would pass, and the temptations to lapse must have been many and serious in heathen Antioch. 'Purpose of heart' was needed. Gentile society was pervaded by idolatrous customs: the convert would be reminded at every turn of the religion which he had left. So Barnabas bent all those powers of exhortation, from which he had derived his name (iv. 36), to urging them to 'cleave to the Lord'—not to their profession of faith, not to an abstract Christianity, but to the living personal Saviour.<sup>d</sup>

**24. For he was a good man.** It would not have been surprising if his approval of facts so opposed to his prejudices, and even to his former convictions, had been somewhat grudging. But he was 'a good man', and so was ready to welcome good work done by others; was 'full of the Holy Spirit', and so was able to recognize the presence of the Spirit when he saw it; was full 'of faith', and so was prepared to carry out the work without misgivings as to the consequences.<sup>e</sup>

The natural, but not certain, inference from the past tense—'he was'—is that Barnabas was dead when Luke wrote. In any case, the tribute is remarkable, because such words of praise are unusual in the Acts. It looks as though Luke, the friend and companion of Paul, wished to show that he was not prejudiced against the man

<sup>a</sup> Purves, p. 103; Eadie, p. 37; Adeney, p. 315; J. Robertson, p. 101.

<sup>b</sup> Cotterill, p. 321.    <sup>c</sup> A. T. Robertson, p. 97; Iverach, p. 37; Eadie, p. 38.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 408; Eadie, p. 40.    <sup>e</sup> Iverach, p. 38.

whose sad quarrel with Paul he was about to narrate later, but highly esteemed his character.<sup>a</sup>

**25. departed to Tarsus.** It is possible that the Church at Jerusalem had contemplated this step from the first, and so had deputed Barnabas to visit Antioch alone, instead of sending a colleague with him (as in viii. 14); instructing him, if he were satisfied with what he had found, to invite Saul, of whose special commission to the Gentiles they had heard and rumours of whose work in Cilicia had reached them (Gal. i. 24), to become his fellow labourer.<sup>b</sup> But it is more likely that Barnabas could not see this stir of life in a Gentile city without recalling the instrument chosen by God to bear His name before the Gentiles (ix. 15); and conscious of his own limitations and of the fact that difficult problems had to be faced, such as needed the presence, not merely of a good man, but of a master mind, able to foresee issues and to lay down principles, bethought him of his old friend.<sup>c</sup> None the less, his action showed his unselfishness and humility. He had been doing good work in Antioch and had gained many converts; but, when he saw a great door opened, he at once enlisted the help of one whom he must have known to be abler and more gifted than himself. He had none of the littleness which cannot bear the presence of a possible rival. His only thought was of the advancement of the cause, and for this he willingly effaced himself.<sup>d</sup>

**to seek Saul.** Apparently, Saul was using Tarsus as his headquarters, and making missionary excursions thence to neighbouring places; and Barnabas, having no certain knowledge where he was to be found, went to Tarsus as the most likely place in which to hear of him.<sup>e</sup>

**26. he brought him to Antioch.** So Saul left, perhaps for the last time, the home of his childhood, and entered on his life's work, introduced to it by the same friend who had before introduced him to the disciples at Jerusalem (ix. 27). It may be imagined how deeply the news which Barnabas brought must have stirred him. At last the opening, for which he had been so long waiting, had come!

**for a whole year.** Saul's recent experiences in Cilicia would help him, and this year's work at Antioch would be still more valuable. It taught him by the logic of facts that Jews and Gentiles could be fellow members of the same Church.

<sup>a</sup> Wordsworth, *Acts*; Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> Fouard, *Peter*, p. 166; Iverach, p. 38.

<sup>d</sup> Eadie, p. 43; Macduff, *Paul*, p. 97.

<sup>b</sup> Briggs, p. 31.

<sup>e</sup> Kitto, p. 218; Briggs, p. 32.

**taught much people.** Though the beginning of enlargement was made (ver. 24) before Saul's appearance on the scene, decisive movement came through his ability and enthusiasm. It can scarcely be wrong to ascribe mainly to his energy the strong position which Christianity acquired in Antioch. The 'much people' were without doubt largely Gentiles—so largely that in the view of the outside world the Church took a new aspect and a new character. Luke evidently connects the new name with the final departure of Christianity from Jewish ideals. At the same time, the attention which the community attracted in Antioch must not be over-estimated. In so vast a city the 'much people' might be almost unnoticeable.<sup>a</sup>

**Christians.** Hitherto they had called themselves 'disciples', 'believers', 'brethren', 'saints', or 'those of the Way': the Jews had called them 'Galileans' or 'Nazarenes': the general public had not distinguished them from other Jewish sects. Now, when they formed a society distinguishable from the Jews, a distinctive name was convenient. And because one Name was constantly on their lips, the outside world called them by it; gave them, all unwittingly, a name that was appropriate to a religion destined to be universal; a name that indicated neither locality nor nationality, but only a relation to a Person. The Christians did not, however, themselves adopt it till a much later date. It is not employed by Christian writers at a time when it was familiar to the younger Pliny (*Ep.* x. 96) and to Tacitus (*Ann.* xv. 44), but suddenly becomes of frequent occurrence in the writings of the Apologists dealing with pagans.<sup>b</sup>

The emphatic position of the word at the end of the sentence is clearly intended to mark the close of a chapter in the history of the Church. Antioch was the birthplace of Christianity as distinguished from Judaism.<sup>c</sup>

Two celebrated names are connected with Christian Antioch. Early in the second century its bishop, Ignatius, after witnessing a good confession there, was given to the lions at Rome. And in the fourth century Chrysostom preached there the sermons which have made his name illustrious.<sup>d</sup>

27-30

<sup>27</sup> Now in those days there came down prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch. <sup>28</sup> And there stood up one of

<sup>a</sup> Watson, p. 72; Binney, p. 101; S. C. Gayford, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Christian.

<sup>b</sup> Dykes, p. 412; Barnes, p. 126; P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 753.

<sup>c</sup> Rackham, *Acts*; Cotterill, p. 326.

<sup>d</sup> Kitto, p. 224.



them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world : which came to pass in the days of Claudius. <sup>29</sup> And the disciples determined to send, every man according to his ability, relief to the brethren who dwelt in Judaea. <sup>30</sup> Which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

**27. there came down prophets.** We are not told why they came ; whether for the instruction of the new converts ; or, in view of the threatened scarcity, to represent the temporal necessities of the brethren at Jerusalem. In either case their coming implies that the Church at Antioch was regarded as a true Church. The relation between the new and the old Church was later to become a delicate question, but at first there was no thought of rivalry.<sup>a</sup>

We may gather from the first Epistle to the Corinthians (xii-xiv) an idea of the functions of the prophet in the early Church. He was one whom God used as a medium for the communication of truth to men. The communication might be didactic or predictive ; but the main idea is that he was an inspired teacher.<sup>b</sup>

**28. stood up.** Probably at a meeting of the brethren ; which, again, shows that the Christians from Jerusalem were in a relation of brotherly feeling with the Church at Antioch.<sup>c</sup>

**named Agabus.** The name is probably interpolated here from xxi. 10, where Agabus is introduced as though he had not been mentioned before. The close similarity of the words in the two passages—‘ there came down prophets from Jerusalem ’ (ver. 27) and ‘ there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus ’ (xxi. 10)—might easily suggest the interpolation.<sup>d</sup>

**signified.** The word suggests the employment of some symbolical action, as in xxi. 4.<sup>e</sup>

**all the world.** The author elsewhere uses this expression (Luke ii. 1) to denote the Roman Empire.

**came to pass in the days of Claudius.** The words imply, though the inference is not certain, that the prediction was made before the death of Caligula and the accession of Claudius in January, A. D. 41 ; and so may furnish a chronological datum. Luke tells of

<sup>a</sup> Briggs, p. 52 ; Lechler, i. 191 ; Dykes, p. 421.

<sup>b</sup> Iverach, p. 44 ; Purves, p. 105.

<sup>d</sup> Harnack, *Luke*, p. 38.

<sup>c</sup> Lechler, i. 191.

<sup>e</sup> Dykes, p. 422.

the prediction and of its fulfilment, but not of the interval between them. The collection was not taken to Jerusalem till the spring of A. D. 44, the year of Herod's death—that is, three years and a half later. The great distress in Judaea began in A. D. 45 ; so that, through this prediction, the Christians were beforehand in their aid.<sup>a</sup>

**29. determined to send.** The suggestion may have come from Barnabas, who had been foremost at an earlier period (iv. 37) in relieving the necessities of the poorer brethren; and who is so often brought before us as performing some act of sympathy and tenderness. He might also feel that such material help would be an effective report on the character of the movement which he had been sent to inspect.<sup>b</sup>

**relief to the brethren.** Perhaps the Christian Jews at Jerusalem had ceased to share the benefit of contributions which were under the administration of the Jewish leaders.<sup>c</sup> It was usual for foreign synagogues of wealthy Jews to remit aid at times of distress to their brethren in the Holy Land. But the Church at Antioch does not appear to have sent through the Synagogue. Thus it was the first express recognition of the fact that the Church and the Synagogue had parted company. And further, it was palpable evidence that a new spirit of love and brotherhood was stirring in the world. Never before had Gentiles held out hands of fellowship to Jews across the gulf of separation, and called them 'brethren.' The action was in principle the same as that induced at Jerusalem by the first impulse of Christian spirit, but it now assumed a different shape. The formal communism had broken down; the spiritual communism continued—the idea that in Christ there is the unity of a real brotherhood.<sup>d</sup>

**30. to the elders.** Of the institution of elders no account is given; perhaps because the office, unlike that of the Seven, was not called suddenly into existence, but grew up gradually, in imitation of the office bearing the same name in the Synagogue. As the Seven were broken up by death or absence, their duties would naturally devolve on those whom age and tried qualities fitted to exercise them.<sup>e</sup> No inference can safely be drawn from the absence of any mention of the Apostles. They may have been scattered by the persecution of Herod before Barnabas and Saul arrived; but the matter of relief concerned the elders, and not the Apostles, whose

<sup>a</sup> Lechler, i. p. xxvi; Iverach, p. 45; Dykes, p. 424.

<sup>b</sup> Adeney, p. 317; Stifler, p. 103.

<sup>c</sup> Johnston, p. 36.

<sup>d</sup> Dykes, p. 423; Baumgärten, i. 349; Cotterill, p. 327.

<sup>e</sup> Stanley, p. 63.

work was not to 'serve tables'; and it was at a meeting of the elders that Paul presented his later collection (xxi. 18). Moreover, the alms were intended for 'the brethren which dwelt in Judaea'; and elders in Judaea, as well as in Jerusalem, may be meant. In that case it may have been now that Saul preached in Judaea (xxvi. 20).

## CHAPTER XII

### I-4

<sup>1</sup> Now at that time Herod the king laid his hands on certain of the Church to do them hurt. <sup>2</sup> And he slew James, the brother of John, with the sword. <sup>3</sup> And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. Those were the days of unleavened bread. <sup>4</sup> And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, committing him to the custody of sixteen soldiers, four in each watch; being minded to bring him forth to the people after the Passover.

1. **Herod the king.** The title is a mark of accuracy. Not for thirty years before, nor ever after, but only in the last three years of Herod's life, was there a person exercising authority in Judaea with the title of King.<sup>a</sup>

Some eight years had passed since the persecution which followed Stephen's death. The motive of that persecution had been theological; the motive of this one, so far at least as Herod was concerned, was political. The grandson of Herod the Great who murdered the Innocents, the nephew of Antipas who murdered the Baptist, and the father of Agrippa before whom Paul spoke (xxv), he had been educated at Rome, and gradually obtained possession of all his grandfather's dominions. Caligula gave him the tetrarchy first of Trachonitis and then of Galilee and Petraea, and Claudius subsequently added Samaria and Judaea. But he had many prejudices to combat. Not only had he been made king by the hated Romans, but the King of Israel was not to be a foreigner (Deut. xvii. 15); and though he had in his veins, through his grandmother Mariamne, the blood of the old dynasty of the Maccabees, Antipater, the founder

<sup>a</sup> Paley.

of the Herodian family, was an Edomite, a descendant of Israel's predestined foe (Gen. xxv. 23 seq.) Hence the chief aim of his policy was to ingratiate himself with his subjects. While he gratified the Romanized section by building theatres and holding games, he sought to conciliate the stricter faction by affecting zeal for the national faith.<sup>a</sup> According to Josephus<sup>b</sup> he maintained close relations with the high priest.

**laid his hands.** The extreme brevity of the narrative is best explained by the assumption that Luke's source contained stories about Peter, and only cursorily touched other subjects.<sup>c</sup> No explanation is given of the cause of this attack. The recent step taken in the admission of Gentiles may have led to popular excitement against the Church; or some utterance of Christians on the anniversary of the Crucifixion may have provoked the fanatic pilgrims who thronged the city for the Feast.

**on certain of the Church.** The first victims were apparently persons of less note than the Apostles, and were probably subjected to scourging or some lighter punishment than death.<sup>d</sup>

2. **he slew James.** It was not Luke's object to write biographies, but to trace the progress of the Church. Still, it is clear that he did not know the details of this murder. The choice of James as the first to die looks as though he had been a more conspicuous figure than even Peter, though Luke had no records of him as he had of Peter. His prominent position in the Gospels, and the fiery temper which earned him the name of 'son of thunder', would lead us to expect him to be among the foremost members of the Church.

**with the sword.** There was no trial before the Sanhedrin, followed by a sentence of stoning; but, as in the case of the Baptist, the sentence was arbitrarily pronounced by the king.<sup>e</sup> Did there come to James, as at this season of the Passover he was led, like his Lord, to execution, the memory of the Lord's answer to his mother's petition—that he should 'drink of His cup' (Matt. xx. 23)?

3. **when he saw.** His motive is rightly appraised by Luke. Josephus says that the desire for popularity dictated Herod's whole policy. Having crept to the throne by flattery, he kept his seat by pandering to vulgar prejudices. His first attack on the Christians had been tentative. He was not sure how the unjust and illegal execution of James would be taken by the Jews. Though the Church

<sup>a</sup> Vaughan, ii. 113; Dykes, p. 429; Baumgarten, i. 161, 308.

<sup>b</sup> *Antiq.* xix. vi. 4.

<sup>c</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, pp. 125, 242.

<sup>d</sup> Dick, p. 194.

<sup>e</sup> Renan, *Apostles*, p. 202.

was evidently no longer 'in favour with all the people' (ii. 46), they might resent the supersession of the national tribunal and the despotic use of the Roman sword. And if James was a Christian, he was also by name and birth and training a Jew.<sup>a</sup>

**proceeded to seize.** The Greek words are a Hebraism, and thus point to an Aramaic source. Mark, who was now in Jerusalem (ver. 25), may have been Luke's authority for the following narrative, which is full of the vivid touches which characterize his Gospel.

4. **sixteen soldiers.** As by the execution of James with the sword, so now by the use of soldiers and chains, Herod shows his adoption of Roman customs. The extraordinary precautions were doubtless due to Peter's previous escape (v. 19), possibly from the same prison. That escape was probably ascribed to connivance on the part of the jailors; and Herod was determined that there should be no second deliverance. But the scrupulous precautions served only to make the Divine intervention the more conspicuous, just as the guard at the Tomb enhanced the certainty that the body of Jesus had not been stolen by His disciples.<sup>b</sup>

## 5-11

<sup>5</sup> Peter therefore was kept in the prison; but prayer was offered earnestly by the Church to God for him. <sup>6</sup> Now when Herod was about to bring him forth, Peter was sleeping that night between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and guards before the door were keeping the prison. <sup>7</sup> And behold, an angel of the Lord stood over him, and a light shined in the cell: and he smote Peter on the side and awoke him, saying, Rise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. <sup>8</sup> And the angel said to him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And he did so. And he said to him, Cast thy cloak about thee, and follow me. <sup>9</sup> And he went out and followed; and wist not that it was real which was being done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. <sup>10</sup> And when they had passed through the

<sup>a</sup> Weizsäcker, i. 76; Hausrath, ii. 168; Pressensé, p. 61; Macduff, *Peter*, p. 484.

<sup>b</sup> Taylor, *Peter*, p. 279; West, p. 326; Stifler, p. 105.



first and second ward, they came to the iron gate leading to the city; which opened to them of itself; and they went out, and passed through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. <sup>11</sup> And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a truth that the Lord hath sent his angel, and delivered me out of the hand of Herod and disappointed the expectation of the people of the Jews.

**5. but.** An important little word, as in ver. 24. Peter was safely guarded, but faith still prayed. Luke evidently means to suggest a connexion between the prayer and his deliverance.<sup>a</sup>

**prayer was offered.** There was little to encourage hope of Divine intervention. Another Apostle had been recently imprisoned, and God had not seen fit to save him from the sword of the executioner. But the remembrance of Peter's former deliverance, the report of which made Herod multiply precautions, would make them more insistent in their prayers. And they were doubtless praying, not only for his deliverance, but for the Divine support for him—that he might be strengthened to witness a good confession—and for the Divine consolation for themselves in their hour of trial.<sup>b</sup>

**earnestly.** The Greek word is the same which Luke employs in his Gospel (xxii. 44) to describe the praying of the Redeemer in the Garden; when, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says (v. 7), He 'offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears'.

**6. was sleeping.** It was a grand instance of calm trust in God. James had just died by the command of the same Herod; and now his own last night had come. In a dark cell, oppressed by the heat which had made him lay aside his cloak (ver. 8), he illustrated the words of the Psalmist (cxxvii. 2), 'So he giveth his beloved sleep.' Soldiers might guard his body, but the grace of God 'sentinelled his heart' (Phil. iv. 7). It is no detraction from his faith to say that he may have remembered his Lord's prophecy that he should die in his old age and by crucifixion (John xxi. 18), whereas he was still in middle age, and was to die by the sword.

<sup>a</sup> Vaughan, ii. 119; Thomas, *Acts*, p. 201.

<sup>b</sup> West, p. 329; Taylor, *Peter*, p. 280; Spence, p. 208.

His sleep would in that case show his faith and trust in his Master's words. But those words do not necessarily indicate more than captivity, though St. John, looking back upon them half a century later, saw in them a prophecy of the particular death by which Peter in his old age had glorified God (John xxi. 19).<sup>a</sup>

7. **an angel of the Lord.** The hour must have been between 3 a.m., when the guards would be relieved, and 6 a.m., when they would again be changed and the escape discovered (ver. 18). As Peter and his guards were all asleep, it was probably some little time after 3 a.m.

**smote Peter.** So sound was his sleep, that he was not roused by the unwonted light. Probably his first idea, when he was awakened by the blow on his side, was that it was the summons to execution.<sup>b</sup>

8. **Gird thyself.** The angel does only what the man could not do for himself. He snaps the chains, but does not gird the prisoner. So when the guards were passed (ver. 20) and Peter no longer needed supernatural help, he was left to find his own way to Mary's house. The same economy of miracle is seen elsewhere. Jesus raised Lazarus, but human hands must 'loose him and let him go' (John xi. 44).<sup>c</sup>

**Cast thy cloak about thee.** It was not to be a flight. He was to escape, not only with his life, but with every article of his attire, that the Divine supremacy over Herod might be fully manifest. The same orderly calmness and absence of hurry are seen in the circumstances of our Lord's coming forth from His prison of the grave, when Peter beheld 'the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself' (John xx. 7).<sup>d</sup>

9. **thought he saw.** An indication that the narrative was derived ultimately from Peter himself. So below, 'when Peter was come to himself' (ver. 11).

10. **passed through.** The expression could not be used of passing single sentinels, so that there were two pairs of prison warders distinct from the four soldiers who guarded Peter, two chained to him and two outside the door of his cell. On the other hand, it is possible that the soldiers to whom he was chained, who

<sup>a</sup> Thomas, *Acts*, p. 201; Macduff, *Peter*, p. 491; Dodd, p. 18; Swete, p. 62.

<sup>b</sup> Dodd, p. 17; Dykes, p. 440.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, i. 385.

<sup>d</sup> Baumgarten, i. 321; Spence, p. 211.

would not require to remain awake and therefore to be relieved, were distinct from the four special soldiers, who were posted in couples outside the cell.<sup>a</sup>

**opened to them of itself.** Josephus mentions a number of portents which preceded the destruction of the Temple, and among them that at the Passover the heavy gates of the Temple, which were shut with difficulty by twenty men and had bolts fastened deep into solid stone, opened of their own accord in the night.<sup>b</sup>

## 12-17

<sup>12</sup> And when he was aware of it, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, surnamed Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. <sup>13</sup> And when he knocked at the door of the porch, a maid went to answer, named Rhoda. <sup>14</sup> And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the door for joy, but ran in, and told that Peter stood before the porch. <sup>15</sup> And they said to her, Thou art mad. But she confidently affirmed that it was even so. And they said, It is his angel. <sup>16</sup> But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened, they saw him and were amazed. <sup>17</sup> But he, motioning to them to hold their peace, explained to them how the Lord had brought him forth out of the prison. And he said, Tell these things to James and to the brethren. And he departed, and went to another place.

**12. the house of Mary.** It must have been of some size to accommodate so many. This agrees with the fact that her cousin (Col. iv. 10), Barnabas, was a man of substance. The upper room mentioned in i. 13 may have been in her house, since few of the early converts were socially in a position to own a large house. Mark may have been the man 'bearing a pitcher of water' (Luke xxii. 10) whom the Lord bade His disciples follow, when they went to prepare the Passover. Peter naturally went thither, as some

<sup>a</sup> Page, *Acts*; Walch, *De vinculis Petri*.

<sup>b</sup> Josephus, *B. J.* vi. v. 3; Plummer, *St. Matthew*, p. 402.

special tie existed between him and this family. He calls Mark his 'son' (1 Pet. v. 13).<sup>a</sup>

**13. Rhoda.** That the name of the servant was known to Luke suggests that the account was derived from Mark or Peter. The name is Gentile, and the Greek word rendered 'maid' usually denotes a slave girl, and female slaves were often employed as doorkeepers (John xviii. 16).

**14. opened not the door.** The narrative is singularly natural. Instead of admitting Peter, she leaves him exposed to danger, while she runs to gladden the others with the good news. Her joy is evidence of the way in which differences of position were levelled by the common faith. The slave reckons herself to belong to the family.<sup>b</sup>

**15. Thou art mad.** Another very human touch. They had been praying earnestly: the appearance of Peter was proof of the power of prayer: and they are slow to believe it. It must not, however, be hastily assumed that their prayer had been for his release. Neither Stephen nor James had been delivered from death. It is more likely (see on ver. 5) that their prayer had been that Peter might be strengthened to die as Stephen and James had died. But God did exceeding abundantly above all that they asked or thought, and gave him back alive. Such an answer to their prayer was more than they could at first believe. But it was the surprise of joy rather than the incredulity of unbelief: just as the disciples, when the Risen Lord appeared to them, 'disbelieved for joy' (Luke xxiv. 41).<sup>c</sup>

**It is his angel.** The word has been variously explained. Some understand a 'messenger' sent by Peter. The same Greek word is used of the Baptist's messengers (Luke vii. 24) and of Christ's messengers (Luke ix. 52). But they could scarcely have thought that Peter would be able to send a messenger from his prison. Others understand his 'apparition' to be meant; just as the disciples supposed the Risen Lord to be 'a spirit' (Luke xxiv. 37). They thought that Peter had been already executed in prison, as the Baptist had been. It is, however, better to regard it as an illustration of the Jewish belief in 'guardian angels', who on critical occasions assumed the likeness of those committed to their care and spoke with their voice. This belief may be thought to receive

<sup>a</sup> Thomas, *Acts*, p. 199; Dykes, p. 466.

<sup>b</sup> Thomas, *Acts*, p. 199; Dobschütz, p. 144; Lechler, i. 87.

<sup>c</sup> Pressensé, p. 62; Lewis, p. 278; West, p. 346.

a sanction in our Lord's words in Matt. xviii. 10, but they mean rather<sup>a</sup> that the angels which are nearest to the Throne are those who have the childlike qualities.

16. **when they had opened.** The whole company had hurried down to the courtyard.

17. **to hold their peace.** The loud exclamations of astonishment and joy endangered his safety, and every moment was precious.

**to James and to the brethren.** The members of the Church were far too numerous to meet in any one place. It has been suggested<sup>b</sup> that this gathering may have been of women only, the men being in hiding on account of the persecution. But it is more likely that, as this family were Cypriotes, the gathering was of Hellenist Christians. 'James and the brethren' had probably met elsewhere for prayer. The silence as to the Twelve does not necessarily prove their absence; but Jerusalem appears to have ceased by this time to be their settled home, and the presidency of the Church had passed to the Lord's brother.

There are three main theories held as to the relationship to Jesus implied in the expression 'the brethren of the Lord'. (i) They were sons of Mary by Joseph, and therefore His brothers as truly as Mary was His mother. (ii) They were sons of Joseph by a former wife, and therefore not His blood relations at all. (iii) They were sons of the Virgin's sister, the wife of Alphaeus, and therefore His cousins.

The subject is exhaustively discussed by Bishop Lightfoot<sup>c</sup> who, after conclusively refuting the third theory, adopts the second in preference to the first. Those, however, whose judgment is not biassed by the doctrine, for which there is no foundation in Scripture, of the perpetual virginity of Mary, will consider that the language of the Gospels is decidedly in favour of the first. For the brethren are associated with Jesus and His mother in such a manner as naturally to imply that she was also their mother. 'His mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him' (Matt. xii. 46); 'Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?' (Matt. xiii. 55).

**to another place.** Probably Luke did not know whither he went. It was certain that Herod would be greatly exasperated and would employ every means to recapture him. Consequently it

<sup>a</sup> Plummer, *St. Matthew*, p. 251.

<sup>b</sup> H. Brinton, *Expositor*, II. i. 313.

<sup>c</sup> Galatians, p. 247.



would be prudent to keep his place of retirement secret at the time, and later it was unknown.<sup>a</sup>

There are two ways in which the above story of the angel may have originated. The exclamation 'It is his angel' (ver. 15) was preserved, and was later misinterpreted. Or it may have grown<sup>b</sup> out of the death angel of Herod (ver. 23). With the death of the king, the prison doors opened for those whom he had confined rather out of caprice than in the interests of justice.

Professor Ramsay points out<sup>c</sup> that Peter had to think over the situation (ver. 11) before he came to the conclusion that his deliverer was a messenger from the Lord. Apparently he had not been conscious of anything supernatural. That the gate opened of itself (ver. 10) is to an Oriental mind an expression consistent with natural agency. The deliverer had appeared to him in ordinary human form; and Peter only inferred his superhuman mission on subsequent reflection. His language then was the natural expression of the belief that God's hand is to be traced in all events; and the Oriental, more than the Western, habitually thinks and speaks of God's presence and action in common affairs. Peter might well have had sympathizers at the court of Herod, since Manaen, the king's foster-brother, was a Christian (xiii. 1); and if he knew that his deliverer was a real human being, he might still speak of him as an angel of the Lord; and piously ascribe his escape to the Divine intervention. Details might be subsequently elaborated. In any case, no reader can be blind to the beauty of the dress in which Luke has clothed the story, or to the deep moral teaching which it conveys.

### 18-19

<sup>18</sup> Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. <sup>19</sup> And when Herod had sought for him and found him not, he examined the guards, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and tarried there.

**19. be put to death.** This was no act of extraordinary cruelty, but a simple application of the Roman military law, by which a

<sup>a</sup> West, p. 344; Weizsäcker, i. 77.

<sup>b</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 4566.

<sup>c</sup> *Expositor*, April, 1909.

soldier was answerable for a prisoner with his life. The method of Peter's escape was not known: extraordinary precautions had been taken for his custody; and the natural inference was that the soldiers had either slept at their post, or been bribed to connive at his escape.<sup>a</sup>

But while the execution of the guards presents no difficulty if Peter's escape was effected by human agency, it is not easy to reconcile it with our idea of Divine justice, if his rescue was the work of an angel. That Herod sought for Peter without success points to the probability that the people took the Apostle's part; and in that case his escape through the intervention of friends is more possible.<sup>b</sup>

Harnack<sup>c</sup> regards the two narratives of Peter's release from prison by an angel (v. 19 and xii. 7-11) as 'evidently doublets'. It may be so. But he himself supplies<sup>d</sup> an instructive warning against hastily assuming that two stories are duplicates because they are similar. In the third decade of the last century the son of one Trümpi, a pastor in Schwanden, was drowned when bathing in the Aar near Aarau. In the same decade the son of one Leuzinger, a pastor in Schwanden, was drowned when bathing in the Aar near Aarau. As Aarau is a long way from Schwanden, it might well be assumed that the two occurrences were really one, a mistake having been made in the name. Yet both events actually occurred.

**from Judaea to Caesarea.** Luke does not regard the Roman Caesarea as belonging to Judaea in the strict sense of the word. It is interesting to note the occurrence of the same expression in a 'we'-section (xxi. 10).<sup>e</sup>

From the death of Archelaus in A.D. 6 to the fall of Jerusalem Judaea was governed by a Roman Procurator, with the exception of the three years of Herod Agrippa's reign. At this time, he would be in power at Caesarea.

## 20-23

<sup>20</sup> Now he was highly displeased with the people of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and having secured the goodwill of Blastus, the

<sup>a</sup> Thomas, *Acts*, p. 200.

<sup>b</sup> Giles, p. 214.

<sup>c</sup> *Acts*, p. 160.

<sup>d</sup> *Acts*, p. 247.

<sup>e</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 74.

king's chamberlain, asked for peace; because their country was dependent for its food on the king's country. <sup>21</sup> And upon a set day Herod arrayed himself in royal robes and sat on the throne and made a speech to them. <sup>22</sup> And the people began to shout, The voice of a god, and not of a man! <sup>23</sup> And immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten by worms, and died.

**20. with one accord.** That is, envoys came jointly from the two cities.

**Blastus.** The fact that this name and the incident of the embassy do not occur in Josephus' account of Herod's death proves the independence of Luke in the following narrative.<sup>a</sup>

**was dependent.** As in Solomon's day (1 Kings v. 9 seq., cf. Ezek. xxvii. 17), these large commercial cities, without any proportionate territory, depended on Palestine for their food supply.<sup>b</sup> Their desire for peace would be stimulated by the pressure of the famine.

**21. upon a set day.** According to Josephus (xvii. vi. 8), Herod, on the second day of a splendid festival, which he gave to commemorate the triumphal return of Claudius from Britain, entered the theatre, dressed in a robe of silver tissue, which flashed as the sun's rays caught it; and the people hailed him as a god. He did not rebuke them; but looking up he saw an owl perched above his head, and took it for an augury of evil. Presently he was seized with internal pains, and died after five days of acute suffering.<sup>c</sup> Eusebius (ii. 18) makes a discreditable alteration of the 'owl' into 'an angel', in order to bring the narrative into harmony with the Acts.

**22. The voice of a god.** The theatre was thronged with the idle mob, whose amusement he was supplying with profuse liberality; and they gave him what they knew would please him—the adoration which the Roman Emperors received.<sup>d</sup>

**23. smote him.** Like Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 30), he was doomed by heaven in the very hour of his pride and triumph.

**because he gave not.** As a Jew, he should have repelled the

<sup>a</sup> A. C. Headlam, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Herod.

<sup>b</sup> Page, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> Page, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Farrar, i. 316; Stifler, p. 110.

blasphemous homage with horror and indignation. Many modern writers follow Eusebius in saying that his death was a Divine judgment for his persecution of the Church. Why, it is asked, did Luke mention his death here at all, if he did not mean to suggest this? It is impossible to say why he introduced the story here, but it cannot be right to assign a reason which is disposed of by his own words. He not only does not say that the death was a judgment for the murder of James and the imprisonment of Peter, but he does say that it was the punishment of Herod's vanity and self-glorification.<sup>a</sup>

**eaten by worms.** Evidently Luke did not regard the angel as the instrument of death in any such sense as to exclude the operation of natural causes.<sup>b</sup> The disease, from its loathsome character, was looked on as a Divine chastisement. Antiochus Epiphanes, the type of a godless prince (2 Macc. ix. 2 seq.), Herod the Great (Josephus, *Antiq.* xvii. vi. 5), and Maximin, the persecutor (Euseb. viii. 16), are all said to have died of it.

**died.** He was carried out of the theatre a dying man, though he lingered in agony for five days.

## 24-25

<sup>24</sup> But the word of God grew and multiplied. <sup>25</sup> And Barnabas and Saul, having discharged their ministration, returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John surnamed Mark.

**24. the word of God grew.** Palestine reverted, at the death of Herod, to government by a Roman Procurator, and the Jewish fanatics could not so easily persecute.<sup>c</sup>

**25. returned from Jerusalem.** Professor Ramsay<sup>d</sup> refers to this time the vision to Saul in the Temple (xxii. 17). But see note on ix. 29.

**Mark.** Peter, his chosen friend and teacher, was no longer at Jerusalem; and so Mary consented to her son accompanying his cousin, Barnabas. Barnabas and Saul had probably been staying in her house, and the personality of Saul may have kindled the young man's enthusiasm. But he had been living among the narrow prejudices of the Jerusalem Church, and the sequel suggests that

<sup>a</sup> Maurice, p. 181; Baumgarten, i. 328.

<sup>b</sup> Hackett, *Acts*. <sup>c</sup> Thomas, *Acts*, p. 61.

<sup>d</sup> *Paul*, p. 60 seq.

the relationship with Barnabas rather than his sympathy with Saul's views led him to accompany them.

If Mark was the 'young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body' (Mark xiv. 51), it looks as though the Traitor and his posse had gone first to Mary's house, expecting to find Jesus there; and the young man had hurried away, covered only with a sheet from his bed, to give the alarm in Gethsemane.<sup>a</sup> There is, however, no absolute certainty that the John Mark of the Acts is the same as the traditional author of the Gospel.

## CHAPTER XIII

THE section of the Book which begins with this chapter is evidently based upon some fresh source, as is shown by the mention of the presence of Barnabas and Saul in Antioch, as though there had been no previous account of their work there. That the document is an early one is proved by the position of Saul's name at the end of the list of prophets, showing that it dates from a time before his fame had eclipsed that of others. It must be Antiochean in origin, and probably gave an account of the first mission to Gentiles. Eusebius says <sup>b</sup> that Luke was a native of Antioch. Whether this be correct or not, it is evident that he had exceptional sources of information about the Church in that city (see on xvi. 10).

### I-3

<sup>1</sup> Now there were in the Church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup> And as they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereto I have called them. <sup>3</sup> Then, when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands upon them, they let them go.

**1. in the Church.** The Christian society at Antioch must have been large. 'A great number' believed before the arrival of Barnabas; 'much people was added' after he came; and after Saul

<sup>a</sup> Bacon, p. 94.

<sup>b</sup> *H. E.* iii. 4, 6.



joined him, they laboured for a year 'and taught much people' (xi. 21, 24, 26).<sup>a</sup> The organization would seem to have been more democratic than at Jerusalem. There is no mention of elders. When the missionaries returned, they rendered an account of their work to the whole assembly (xiv. 27); and when Paul and Silas started on the second journey, it was the whole body of 'brethren' which commended them to God (xv. 40). Nor do we hear of any one with presidential authority such as James exercised at Jerusalem.<sup>b</sup>

**prophets and teachers.** The variation in the Greek connecting particles appears to mark them off into two groups of three prophets and two teachers.<sup>c</sup> But there was little real distinction between them. The essence of prophecy in the early Church, as in the Old Testament, was not prediction, but the delivery of an inspired message of instruction or exhortation. The Divine prompting might take the form of prediction, as in the case of Agabus (xi. 28); but normally it took the shape of authoritative declaration of the Divine will with reference to duty. 'He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort' (1 Cor. xiv. 3).<sup>d</sup>

It is significant that the five names represent five different countries. The missionary enterprise may have originated in the longing to offer the Gospel to their own people.<sup>e</sup> As regards the order, Barnabas comes first, with the prestige attaching to his standing in the Church at Jerusalem. Then come three men who had probably been the pioneers of Gentile evangelization at Antioch (xi. 20). Last comes Saul, as the latest to join the band.<sup>f</sup>

**Symeon called Niger.** He was probably either the son of Jews settled in Africa, or an African proselyte who derived his nickname from his swarthy complexion. The tradition may be true which identifies him with the 'Simon of Cyrene' who carried the Saviour's Cross; since the two sons of the latter, Alexander and Rufus, were evidently well known in the Church (Mark xv. 21). Jews from 'the parts of Libya about Cyrene' were present at Pentecost (ii. 10), and had a synagogue at Jerusalem (vi. 9).<sup>g</sup>

**Lucius.** There is no reason whatever for identifying him with

<sup>a</sup> Binney, p. 135.

<sup>b</sup> A. F. W. Blunt, p. 47.

<sup>c</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 65.

<sup>d</sup> Briggs, p. 66; Stanley, *Corinthians*, p. 243; F. W. Robertson, *Corinthians*, p. 189.

<sup>e</sup> F. B. Meyer, p. 82.

<sup>f</sup> Briggs, p. 62; Pask, p. 111.

<sup>g</sup> Hausrath, ii. 210; Briggs, p. 63.

the author of the Acts, though such a mistaken identification may have led to the tradition that Luke was a native of Antioch.<sup>a</sup>

**Manaen.** The word translated 'foster-brother' is sometimes used in Hellenistic Greek merely in the sense of 'courtier', and need not necessarily imply more.<sup>b</sup> But probably it has here its literal meaning. Josephus relates<sup>c</sup> how an Essene, named Manaen, told Herod the Great in his boyhood that he would one day be king of the Jews. When, some twenty years later, the prediction was fulfilled, Herod sent for him, and wished him to live at his court, but the old man refused. At the birth of Antipas, the king may have selected a grandson of this Manaen, bearing his name, to be educated with his son. The fact that Herod the Great was a public benefactor of Antioch, which he adorned with a stately colonnade, may have attracted Manaen to the city and given him a position of influence there.<sup>d</sup>

It may, further, have been through this Manaen, whose Essene origin would predispose him towards the ascetic Baptist, that Herod came under John's influence (Mark vi. 20). We read that 'John in prison sent two of his disciples' to Jesus (Matt. xi. 2). As a prisoner, he was not likely to have had access to any of his disciples unless they were members of Herod's court. Could the two have been Manaen and Chuza (Luke viii. 3)? Our Lord's words (Matt. xi. 8), 'But what went ye out for to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft raiment are in kings' houses,' seem to be suggested by the court dress worn by them. And, again, may not Manaen be the 'nobleman' of John iv. 46? The unusual Greek word so translated denotes 'a royal personage', and would well describe the semi-royal rank of Herod's foster-brother.<sup>e</sup> In any case, it is interesting to mark the strange divergence of the two boys nursed at the same breast.

The addition of the Roman name Niger to the Jewish Symeon, the description of Lucius as of 'Cyrene', and the mention of Manaen's relation to the Idumaeen Herod, imply that the position of the three men in the Church at Antioch was not due to their Jewish origin, but to their Gentile connexions.<sup>f</sup>

## 2. as they were worshipping. Hitherto evangelistic work

<sup>a</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*; A. C. Headlam, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Lucius.

<sup>b</sup> T. K. Cheyne, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 2917.

<sup>c</sup> *Antiq.* xv. x. 5.

<sup>d</sup> Briggs, p. 64; H. Cowan, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Manaen; Plumptre, p. 59.

<sup>e</sup> Suggested in conversation by Canon J. M. Wilson.

<sup>f</sup> Baumgarten, i. 351.

has been the result of circumstances or of the earnest zeal of individuals. The Church had made no organized efforts to carry the Gospel abroad. Now teachers were sent forth from Antioch with that definite purpose. To her belongs the honour of inaugurating the foreign mission work of the Church. She possessed special qualifications to be a centre of missionary activity, in her geographical position, her wide commercial relations, her population of various races, and her amalgamation of Eastern and Western civilization. But the movement was due to no external advantages, but sprang, as all the best things spring, from prayer. Christ had told His disciples (Matt. ix. 38) to 'pray the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest'. Now the Church prayed, and the Lord sent the labourers.<sup>a</sup>

**and fasting.** The pious Jew fasted twice in the week (Luke xviii. 12), and Christian Jews would naturally continue the custom. But little emphasis is laid on the practice in the New Testament. In several passages (Matt. xvii. 21; Mark ix. 29; Acts x. 20; 1 Cor. vii. 5) the mention of it appears to be an interpolation.<sup>b</sup> Here it implies a sense that the occasion was specially solemn. The Church was rising for the first time to the comprehension of the Master's words (Matt. xiii. 38), 'The field is the world'; and under the conviction that the hour had come for more aggressive action had met in united prayer for guidance. And as they prayed, light came.<sup>c</sup>

**the Holy Spirit said**—that is, by the mouth of one of the prophets, who, doubtless, like Agabus (xxi. 11), prefaced his utterance with the words, 'Thus saith the Holy Spirit.'

**Separate.** Both men had been called long before, but were now to be solemnly set apart for the special work to which in the Divine purpose they had been destined. Called by God, they received their commission from the Church.<sup>d</sup>

**Barnabas and Saul.** The Church followed the Master's example (Mark vi. 7), when he sent out the Seventy in pairs. Rarely was Paul without a companion. He was 'at Athens alone' (1 Thess. iii. 1), and there his ministry was less successful than anywhere else. He began his work at Corinth alone, and we are told (xviii. 5) of the change wrought in his spirits and activity by the arrival of his friends.<sup>e</sup>

**for the work.** It was unnecessary to define its nature, since it

<sup>a</sup> Olshausen, p. 511; Briggs, p. 3; Pierson, p. 94.

<sup>b</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> Pressensé, p. 52; Briggs, p. 67; Iverach, p. 46.

<sup>d</sup> Binney, p. 137.

<sup>e</sup> Arnot, p. 295; Briggs, p. 86.

was implied in the object for which they had gathered together. And Saul must often have spoken of his future work among the Gentiles—work to which he knew that he had been appointed (ix. 15; xxii. 21).

3. **laid their hands upon them.** This was not ordination, as we understand the word, for they had both been long engaged in the work of the ministry. Still less was Apostleship now conferred, for St. Paul is careful to say (Gal. i. 1) that he had received his Apostleship through no human agency. It was a solemn dedication of them to a work on which they were to enter, not as a personal venture, but as the accredited messengers of the Church. The act is described afterwards (xiv. 26) as a committing of them 'to the grace of God for the work'; and it was an act which might be, and was (xv. 40), repeated whenever a new field of labour was entered upon.<sup>a</sup>

**they let them go.** The next verse states that the Spirit 'sent' them. What the brethren did was to release them from their duties at Antioch.<sup>b</sup> And, in so doing, they set an example to the Church for all time. To Barnabas they were under special obligations. He must have held a place in their esteem and confidence which no other could possess. And Saul could not have worked for a year among them without impressing upon them the conviction that he was no ordinary man.<sup>c</sup> The removal of two such workers involved a heavy sacrifice. But the Church gave of her best in faith that God would supply their places. Nor did she argue that there were heathen enough in Antioch—that it would be time to go to Cyprus when they had been converted. The pleas that have been too often urged to discourage missionary effort availed nothing against the spiritual enthusiasm of the early disciples.<sup>d</sup>

#### 4-12

ON MISSIONARY WORK IN THE FIRST CENTURY. The Acts records mainly the labours of St. Paul, but other missionaries must have been working in every direction. Paul himself alludes (1 Cor. ix. 5) to Peter and the other Apostles receiving maintenance as evangelists; the narrative of the Acts in several places implies their absence from Jerusalem; and though we have no certain data connecting any one of the Twelve with the foundation of particular Churches, tradi-

<sup>a</sup> Eadie, p. 52; Stanley, p. 50.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 67.

<sup>c</sup> Briggs, p. 109.

<sup>d</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 85; Lyman Abbott, p. 43.

tion is uniform in so connecting almost all of them. Further, the natural inference from the wide spread of Christianity in the second century is that the foundations were laid in the first century by a host of preachers unknown to us by name. The silence of the Acts cannot be due to ignorance on Luke's part. But the expansion under St. Paul, working in the chief cities of the Roman world, interested him more than the spread of the Church to East and South. In his estimation other workers sank into insignificance in comparison with the great figure of the man whose friend and fellow worker he himself had been. And he was right. Paul's statesmanship in following the arteries of the Empire made his work historically the most important. But we must not on that account forget the existence of other agents in the spread of the Gospel.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>4</sup> So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia; and sailed thence to Cyprus. <sup>5</sup> And when they arrived at Salamis they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as attendant. <sup>6</sup> And when they had gone through the whole island to Paphos, they found there a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus. <sup>7</sup> He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paullus, a man of intelligence, who called for Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God. <sup>8</sup> But Elymas, or the sorcerer (for such is the meaning of the name), withstood them, seeking to turn aside the Proconsul from the faith. <sup>9</sup> But Saul (who is also called Paul) was filled with the Holy Spirit, and fastening his eyes on him <sup>10</sup> said, O full of all guile and all villainy, son of the devil, enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to turn aside the straight paths of the Lord? <sup>11</sup> And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there

<sup>a</sup> Hanson, p. 3 seq.; Ramsay, *Pauline Studies*, p. 256 seq.; Purves, p. 177; Weizsäcker, ii. 8; Ropes, p. 207.



fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. <sup>12</sup> Then the Proconsul, when he saw what had befallen, believed, being astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

4. **So they.** The usual expression, 'Paul's first missionary journey,' is so far misleading that he had been for years engaged in missionary work in Cilicia and Syria.<sup>a</sup> But now for the first time the purpose of carrying the Gospel to the heathen was definitely present to him.

**Seleucia.** The seaport of Antioch, fifteen miles distant, at the mouth of the Orontes.

**to Cyprus.** They started in obedience to a Divine inspiration, but the particular place to which they went was probably determined by what we call ordinary human considerations.<sup>b</sup> Not only was Cyprus the birthplace of Barnabas, who would be familiar with the people and naturally anxious for their evangelization—subsequently, after his rupture with Paul, he again went thither with Mark (xv. 39)—but the Church at Antioch owed its existence to Cypriotes among others.

5. **Salamis.** It had been the capital of the island under the Ptolemies, and was still, owing to its excellent harbour and commercial prosperity, the largest town, though the seat of government had under the Romans been transferred to Paphos.

**in the synagogues.** Jews had long been settled at Salamis; and their numbers greatly increased after Augustus leased the Cyprian copper mines to Herod the Great.<sup>c</sup> It is interesting to find Paul at once beginning his constant policy of attacking the strongholds of heathenism, the cities. The country follows the lead of the towns; and the battle, if it was to be won, had to be first fought in them.<sup>d</sup> And in another way this plan of action was that to which Paul adhered in all his after-work—to carry the Gospel to the Jew first. Except on those occasions, which are noted, as at Lystra (xiv. 15) and Athens (xvii. 22), he everywhere went first to the synagogue, and only when the Jews rejected his message turned to the Gentiles. Apart from his natural desire to address the first offer of the Gospel to his countrymen, it was the common-sense procedure. As a Jewish Rabbi he would be accorded at first a ready

<sup>a</sup> Wrede, p. 43; McGiffert, p. 173.

<sup>c</sup> Josephus, *Antiq.*, xvi. iv. 5.

<sup>b</sup> Maurice, p. 191.

<sup>d</sup> Ball, p. 40.

welcome in the synagogue ; whereas in the streets of a great city one of a despised and unpopular race would have found it hard to win a hearing.<sup>a</sup> Moreover, the synagogue furnished a connecting link for activity among the heathen. The coarse and incredible myths of polytheism had lost their hold on the nobler spirits of the age ; and such men, in their revolt from the crude idolatries and licentious indulgences round them, turned, in their longing for some worthier object of worship, to the purity and grandeur of the Jewish faith. Hence the synagogue attracted numerous proselytes, and a preacher of the Gospel found in it a bridge over which to pass to pagan circles.<sup>b</sup>

**they had also John as attendant.** John was his Jewish name, Mark the Roman name by which he was known among those for whom the Acts was written (xii. 12, 25). The words are somewhat strangely inserted. They may have been introduced by Luke into his source, because the subsequent narrative (ver. 13) required some previous mention of Mark's presence. Or, since we are not told with what success they preached, the mention of Mark at this point may imply that there were converts to be baptized. But it is more probable that his duty was not to baptize, but to make arrangements for board, lodging, and travelling. Though Paul had later in more distant places to work for his living, he is not likely to have set out from such a Church as Antioch unprovided with money. And the party, as we see from ver. 13, consisted of more than three. Paul's companions are not always mentioned. The name of Titus, for instance, nowhere occurs in the Acts.<sup>c</sup>

It has been suggested<sup>d</sup> that the word translated 'attendant' may be, not a predicate, but an official title—'John, the synagogue minister.' The clause is in close connexion with the mention of synagogues ; the omission of the article is common in the case of official titles ; and, if it was a predicate, the natural order of the Greek words would be different. If this view be correct, we have a fact about Mark which reveals his close ties with Judaism.

**6. through the whole island.** There is no indication as to the length of their stay in Cyprus ; but if they preached in all the towns in which there was a synagogue, this work would occupy many weeks. So far Barnabas, no doubt, took the leading part. As

<sup>a</sup> Maclaren, ii. 4 ; Baring Gould, p. 145 ; Johnston, p. 77.

<sup>b</sup> Wrede, p. 50 ; Eadie, p. 54.

<sup>c</sup> Olshausen, p. 514 ; Lewin, i. 127 ; Johnston, p. 75.

<sup>d</sup> Chase, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Mark.

a native of the island, he may have had acquaintances among the Jews. Whereas he returned thither after his separation from Paul (xv. 39), the latter does not appear to have regarded it as a Church of his foundation and never revisited it.<sup>a</sup>

**to Paphos.** On the west of the island, four hundred miles from Salamis. They were here attacking vice in its very citadel. Paphos was the centre of the worship of Aphrodite, and was notorious, even in that profligate age, for its licentiousness.

**a certain sorcerer.** Luke's accuracy is incidentally confirmed by Pliny, who says<sup>b</sup> that there were in Cyprus two schools of soothsayers, one of which was Jewish; and in connexion with this statement he mentions a Sergius Paullus, who may have been this very Proconsul.<sup>c</sup> In those days, when faith in idolatry was shaken, the Romans, feeling their own weakness and the need of Divine guidance, turned to men who professed to possess supernatural powers. This man was probably a Babylonian Jew, skilled in chemistry and astrology, and beyond his age in his knowledge of the powers of nature. He was what we should call a man of science rather than a sorcerer, though there was at this time no real distinction between science and magic.<sup>d</sup>

**a false prophet.** He had probably taught much that was true about the one God, but had falsely pretended to be in intimate communion with Him, and had supported his pretensions by the arts of magic.<sup>e</sup>

**a Jew.** The sight of a countryman of his own, one of the chosen race, exercising a pernicious influence over heathens, prostituting his knowledge of the sacred books to strengthen what was debasing in superstition, would stir Paul deeply. He would be familiar with such pretenders, being a contemporary of the celebrated thaumaturgist, Apollonius of Tyana, who had studied at Tarsus; and he would feel that in the persons of himself and Elymas Christianity was confronted by a system rather than by an individual.

**7. the proconsul.** A mark of accuracy. In B. C. 30 Cyprus had been made an Imperial province under a Proprætor. But five years later Augustus changed it to a Senatorial province under a Proconsul. Two inscriptions have been found giving the names of Proconsuls of Cyprus in A. D. 51 and 52, and a third ends with the

<sup>a</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, p. 8.

<sup>b</sup> *N. H.* xxx. ii. 6.

<sup>c</sup> Maurice, p. 193.

<sup>d</sup> Vaughan, ii. 144; J. Massie, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Bar-Jesus; Buss, p. 255.

<sup>e</sup> Briggs, p. 120.

words 'in the proconsulship of Paullus', but without any clue to the date.<sup>a</sup>

**a man of intelligence.** He had seen the absurdity of idolatry and felt the insufficiency of scepticism; and he was anxiously in search of truth, and ready to welcome it from whatever source it might come. And the theology of this Jewish magician taught at least the great truths of the unity and the spirituality of the Divine Being. But he was not satisfied; and the same craving that brought him under the influence of Elymas led him to send for these new teachers who spoke of a Divine word of God which taught and enlightened man.<sup>b</sup>

8. **Elymas.** The abruptness with which the Arabic name is introduced looks as though Luke has amalgamated two accounts, in one of which the man was called 'Bar-jesus, a false prophet', in the other 'Elymas, a sorcerer'.<sup>c</sup>

**withstood them.** Apparently a public discussion was arranged. The situation recalls the scene in the Old Testament, where Jannes and Jambres 'withstood' Moses (2 Tim. iii. 8).<sup>d</sup> Evidently the words of the Evangelists produced a deep impression on the Proconsul, and Elymas, feeling that his position and influence were being endangered, put forth all his efforts to counteract them.

9. **who is also called Paul.** It is impossible to suppose, with Jerome, that Saul adopted the name of his first Gentile convert, though the coincidence of the names may have struck Luke and led him to introduce his Roman name at this particular point. As the son of a Roman citizen, Saul must always have had a Roman name; and since it was a common practice with Jews to adopt for use among Gentiles a name which resembled in sound their Hebrew name, Paul would be a likely name for Saul to choose. Luke, by a true instinct, realizes that this occasion, when Saul stood for the first time in the presence of a representative of the Roman government, marked an epoch. It was the real beginning of the work which was ever after associated with his Roman name; and his Hebrew name is henceforth dropped, except when the narrative deals with episodes in his earlier life.

**filled with the Holy Spirit.** Such a case had not occurred before. Cornelius had been a devout worshipper of the true God: Paullus was a typical specimen of the cultured heathen of the day.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Stokes, ii. 205.

<sup>b</sup> Binney, p. 144; Eadie, p. 57.

<sup>c</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 478.

<sup>d</sup> Baumgarten, i. 370; Fouard, *Paul*, p. 14.

<sup>e</sup> Shirley, p. 46.

The critical moment called forth all Paul's powers. Perhaps he became for the first time fully conscious of what his mission to the Gentiles meant: perhaps he now first conceived the dream of winning the Roman Empire to the Gospel. But what Luke is careful to emphasize is that he did not speak under the influence of human passion.

**10. full of all guile.** Evidently Elymas had not employed the legitimate weapons of controversy, but had resorted to evasion and distorted his opponents' statements.<sup>a</sup>

**turn aside.** A plain reference to Isaiah xl. 4, where the preparation for the way of the Lord is described as 'making the crooked straight'.<sup>b</sup>

**11. the hand of the Lord.** The story of Elymas' blindness must have at least an historical basis. If, says Harnack,<sup>c</sup> Luke had wished to invent miracles, he would have consigned Simon Magus, who is painted in darker colours, to some similar fate.

**shalt be blind.** It was a judicial infliction; blindness for blindness, darkness without for wilful darkness within; he who had misled others seeking for a hand to lead him.<sup>d</sup> It may well have been that Paul remembered how God had dealt with himself on the road to Damascus, when he was opposing the truth and fighting against light. Then the visual power which he had misused had been temporarily suspended, or rather turned inward. The very language suggests the comparison. Cf. 'seeking some to lead him by the hand' with 'they led him by the hand' (ix. 8).<sup>e</sup>

**for a season.** The infliction was not simply retributive, but remedial. Paul remembers the mercy shown to himself as well as the judgment. He had been but 'three days without sight'.

**a mist.** Luke here uses a medical term, found in Galen to denote the opacity of the eye caused by a wound.<sup>f</sup>

**12. believed.** The natural inference from the language is that he accepted Christianity. But it is scarcely conceivable that Luke can have meant this. He generally records critical facts, and here he does not even say that Paullus was baptized. Yet the conversion of a Proconsul would have been an event of the first importance, such as we should expect to find recorded even by secular historians, since it would almost certainly have necessitated the resignation of his

<sup>a</sup> Briggs, p. 130.

<sup>c</sup> *Acts*, p. 153.

<sup>e</sup> Page, *Acts*.

<sup>f</sup> Humphrey, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Briggs, p. 132.

<sup>f</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*; Baumgarten, i. 379.



office which involved official patronage of idolatrous worship. Even Christian legend is silent about him. Probably he merely acquiesced courteously in what Paul said, which agreed with his own views. Paul himself did not, it is clear, regard his work in Cyprus as of great importance. He nowhere mentions the island in his letters, nor did he ever revisit it.<sup>a</sup> It may, however, be noted that the name of a Sergia Paullina has been found in a Christian cemetery at Rome, and this looks as if some of his family became Christians.<sup>b</sup>

## 13-15

ON THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA. The Gallic settlement in 'Galatia', in an ethnological sense, has always been well known; but the limits of the Roman province of Galatia, in a political sense, were till recently little understood. It was therefore supposed by Bishop Lightfoot and others that the Galatian Church was founded by St. Paul in his *second* missionary journey (xvi. 6); and that Luke, knowing no details, passed over its foundation, and carried the narrative rapidly forward to Troas, where he himself met Paul. This is known as 'the North Galatian theory'. Renan and other recent commentators hold, on the contrary, that the Churches founded on the *first* missionary journey in Phrygia—Pisidia, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe—are the Churches to which the Epistle was written. This is known as 'the South Galatian theory'. It was, however, little more than a happy guess till Professor Ramsay placed it on a solid basis of historical and archaeological research. Its correctness is now almost beyond question. There is no record of any visit of Paul to Northern Galatia, and the course of the narrative in ch. xvi renders such a visit improbable. The existence of the Epistle to the Galatians is the sole reason for postulating it; and South Galatia satisfied all the requirements in regard to the Epistle.<sup>c</sup>

The following considerations seem to be almost conclusive in favour of the South Galatian theory:—

(i) The well-known Churches of South Galatia disappear entirely from the New Testament when we pass from the Acts, and the Churches of North Galatia, of whose foundation we are told nothing, come into prominence, if we refer to the latter St. Paul's letter to 'the Galatians'.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Rackham, *Acts*; Baring Gould, p. 152; Renan, *Paul*, p. 56.

<sup>b</sup> Simcox, p. 69.

<sup>c</sup> Johnston, p. 102 seq.

<sup>d</sup> Gilbert, p. 262.

(ii) It is inexplicable that the Judaizers should have passed by the Churches of South Galatia and penetrated to the distant North Galatia.

(iii) The converts to whom the Epistle is addressed had evidently received the faith before the Conference at Jerusalem, but St. Paul did not visit North Galatia (if at all) till after the Conference.<sup>a</sup>

(iv) Barnabas is alluded to (Gal. ii. 1, 9, 13) in a way which implies that he was personally known to the Galatians; but he was Paul's companion on his first journey only.

(v) The Epistle implies intimate ties with the Galatians, and therefore a long stay among them. Paul did stay long in South Galatia, but cannot have stayed long (if at all) in North Galatia.

(vi) Galatia took part in the collection for the brethren at Jerusalem (1 Cor. xvi. 1). Is it likely that Paul would have gathered no contribution from the Churches of South Galatia, which he had founded earliest and had later revisited? And how comes Luke to give (xx. 4) two names of South Galatians among the delegates who bore the contributions, but no names of North Galatians?<sup>b</sup>

(vii) It is difficult to see why St. Paul should have turned aside to a district relatively so unimportant as North Galatia, where Jews were few and where the Greek language was less commonly used.<sup>c</sup>

(viii) Early Church history supplies no trace of Churches in North Galatia.<sup>d</sup>

(ix) In his letters St. Paul consistently uses provincial, not local, names. If 'Syria', 'Asia', 'Macedonia', and 'Achaia', mean with him always the Roman province, then 'Galatia' will mean the same—the province, that is, formed under Augustus by the union of Lycaonia, Pisidia, Phrygia, and Paphlagonia with the ethnological Galatia.<sup>e</sup>

Through the chief cities of South Galatia, connected with one another by good military roads, passed a constant stream of intercourse between Rome and the East. Thus they formed a fine strategic position for Paul's campaign. But the same advantage of position which attracted him facilitated the organized subversion of his converts by the Judaizers.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Now Paul and his company put to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John departed

<sup>a</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, p. 44.

<sup>c</sup> *Church Review*, July, 1893.

<sup>e</sup> Weizsäcker, i. 231.

<sup>b</sup> McGiffert, p. 180; Gilbert, p. 263.

<sup>d</sup> Lock, p. 15 seq.

<sup>f</sup> Ragg, p. 132.

from them and returned to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> But they themselves, passing through from Perga, came to Pisidian Antioch. And they went into the synagogue on the sabbath day and sat down. <sup>15</sup> And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, speak it.

**13. Paul and his company.** Paul had already taken the lead in the interview with the Proconsul, and henceforth he retains it. In nothing is the greatness of Barnabas more manifest than in his recognition of the superiority of Paul and acceptance of a secondary position for himself.

**came to Perga.** It has been suggested <sup>a</sup> that the pointed repetition of the expression 'the work' at the beginning (ver. 2) and at the end (xiv. 26) of the account of this mission, and again (xv. 38) in Paul's reference to Mark's departure, indicates that the general outline had been planned before leaving Antioch. But it is more likely that there was a change of plan, since John had been willing to go with them to Perga, but then refused to go north. If so, the new move was the choice of the new leader, just as the choice of Cyprus had been due to Barnabas; and it came as a surprise to his companions. <sup>b</sup>

**John departed.** What was the reason? Many explanations are possible. He was a young man, and had perhaps entered on the work without counting the cost. In Cyprus he may have been among relations and friends; he had, at least, found himself in the familiar Ghetto at every halting-place. But now, when he got to Asia, and heard of swollen rivers and bands of robbers, his heart failed him. Perhaps, too, he was feeling homesick (he did not return to Antioch but to Jerusalem), and finding a ship sailing for Caesarea could not resist the temptation to embark. <sup>c</sup>

Or he may have been offended at the change which had been silently effected in the leadership. When they left Antioch, Barnabas was first and Paul second. The party had now become 'Paul and his company'; and the young cousin felt a jealousy to which the generous Barnabas was himself superior. <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> G. G. Findlay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Paul.

<sup>b</sup> McGiffert, p. 176; Stalker, p. 110.

<sup>c</sup> J. Robertson, p. 112; Fouard, *Paul*, p. 23; Binney, p. 147.

<sup>d</sup> Arnot, p. 303.

Or it may have been genuine alarm on the part of a disciple of the Church at Jerusalem, brought up in the atmosphere of Judaism, at finding himself associated with one who, as he only now realized, was preparing to preach directly to Gentiles.<sup>a</sup> As an Israelite he could not accept this, much less take an active share in it. And it is significant that after the Conference at Jerusalem, when the Church had given its sanction to Paul's policy, Mark was once more anxious to join him.

But whatever his reasons were—and there may have been a mixture of all the above motives—Paul, it is clear, thought him blameworthy. We read later (xv. 38) that he 'thought not good to take with them him who deserted them in Pamphylia and went not with them to the work'.

**14. passing through.** Since they preached in Perga on their return journey (xiv. 25), there must have been some reason why they now left the place at once. It is not likely that they had sailed from Seleucia (ver. 4) before the opening of navigation in March; and as they must have spent some months in Cyprus, it would now be late summer or early autumn, a season at which the coast of Pamphylia was specially unhealthy.<sup>b</sup> Farrar thinks<sup>c</sup> that they found the place deserted, the whole population having migrated in the hot weather to the hills. But this cannot be the explanation, since the custom of so migrating was first introduced by the Turks after the twelfth century.<sup>d</sup> Since St. Paul says (Gal. iv. 13) that it was on account of illness that he preached to the Galatians, Ramsay suggests that the journey north to the hill country may have been undertaken because Paul was prostrated by an attack of malaria. But in such a condition he could scarcely have ventured on the long and dangerous journey from Perga to Pisidian Antioch—'perils of rivers and perils of robbers' (2 Cor. xi. 26) suits this journey better than any other of Paul's of which we know—and he implies that his preaching in Galatia was due to his being detained there by illness rather than to his having gone thither on that account. Nor would malaria excite the feeling of repulsion implied in Gal. iv. 14. There was nothing in it to be a 'temptation' to the Galatians, or to call forth contempt and loathing. Ophthalmia would better answer to the conditions, and Paul may have suffered from snowblindness in crossing the Taurus range.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, p. 74.

<sup>b</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, p. 22.

<sup>c</sup> Vol. i, p. 359.

<sup>d</sup> Ramsay, *Churches*, p. 17.

<sup>e</sup> F. H. Chase, *Expositor*, IV. viii. 401; G. G. Findlay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Paul.

A more likely explanation is <sup>a</sup> that Paul's aim was Ephesus, which was his object in his second missionary journey, when he was turned aside by Divine intervention (xvi. 6), and was the place at which he opened the campaign in his third journey (xix. 1). If it was autumn when he reached Perga, the sea route to Ephesus would be closed, and his natural way would be by the Roman road through Galatia. His purpose was to pass through, but being detained by illness he preached in Galatia on his recovery.

**Pisidian Antioch.** Popularly so called, to distinguish it from 'Syrian Antioch', though it was not actually in Pisidia, but was a Phrygian town on its borders. It had been made a Roman colony in 8 B.C., and was at this time the chief centre of military and civil administration in the south-western portion of the vast province of Galatia.<sup>b</sup>

**the synagogue.** There was but one. The town was more Roman than Greek; and the Jews, though evidently influential (ver. 50), were not numerous.<sup>c</sup>

**on the sabbath day.** It is not said that this was on the first Sabbath after their arrival, and the effect described later (ver. 44) would scarcely have been produced in a few days.<sup>d</sup>

**15. after the reading.** The reading consisted of two lessons from the law and from the prophets, and was in Hebrew. But since the knowledge of that language was confined to the learned, it was interpreted, verse by verse in the case of the law, and three verses at a time in the case of the prophets. It was followed by the sermon, which usually took the shape of an exposition of the Scriptures which had just been read (Luke iv. 17 seq.). It would appear that on the present occasion Paul, with the same readiness with which he took the inscription on an altar as the text of his address at Athens, began with a reference to the lessons of the day. The words translated 'sustained' (ver. 18) and 'lifted up' (ver. 17) occur respectively in the LXX version of Deut. i. 31 and Isaiah i. 2, which two chapters are read on the same Sabbath according to the present Jewish lectionary, which is of unknown antiquity. Both these words are rare in the Old Testament, and Paul uses them in the same sense which they bear in these chapters. Thus we have an incidental proof that he spoke in Greek.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> F. Rendall, *Expositor*, VI. iii. 241.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Expositor*; IV. v. 32; vi. 167.

<sup>c</sup> J. Robertson, p. 131.

<sup>d</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 99.

<sup>e</sup> Farrar, i. 366; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 111; Fouard, *Paul*, p. 28.



**sent to them.** Two chance strangers would scarcely have been thus singled out. It must have become known in the Jewish quarter that the newcomers were Rabbis with a message which they desired to communicate. None the less, the invitation is an interesting illustration of the national and religious unity which bound the Jewish people together throughout the world.<sup>a</sup>

**word of exhortation.** Probably a technical phrase used in the synagogue (cf. Heb. xiii. 22; 1 Tim. iv. 13).<sup>b</sup>

### 16-41

Three missionary speeches by St. Paul are recorded in the Acts, and they are clearly given as examples of his method of preaching to different audiences—at Pisidian Antioch to Jews, at Athens to Gentiles, at Miletus to Christians.<sup>c</sup>

How far is this speech historical? There is no doubt that the style is Luke's, and there is equally no doubt as to the resemblance to Stephen's speech and to speeches by Peter.<sup>d</sup> As to the style, Luke is not likely to have had access to more than brief notes preserved by some Christian at Antioch; and he would have himself to flesh out the skeleton. In doing this he would be helped by the fact that he must have listened to scores of addresses to Jews by St. Paul, who could scarcely fail gradually to stereotype his material.<sup>e</sup> As to resemblances to speeches by Peter, the early preachers of Christianity would be likely to follow similar lines of argument. But as regards Stephen's speech the differences are as marked as the resemblances. Both Stephen and Paul give, it is true, a review of the national history; but that is a common feature in Jewish oratory (cf. 1 Sam. xii), and the motive is wholly different. Stephen was mainly concerned with showing that the Divine revelations had had no necessary connexion with the Holy Land, and that the rejection of Jesus had been foreshadowed in the rejection of Moses. Paul's aim was to show that in earlier deliverances, as in the redemption by Jesus, all was the outcome of the Divine working.<sup>f</sup>

On the other hand, it is possible to trace in this speech the germ of several of the characteristic thoughts of St. Paul's Epistles—justification by faith, the powerlessness of the Mosaic Law to save, and the connexion of Christ's Resurrection with man's justification. And the unmistakable references to the lessons just read in the

<sup>a</sup> Rackham, *Acts*; Johnston, p. 81; Binney, p. 149. <sup>b</sup> Chase, p. 179.

<sup>c</sup> Pfeiderer, *Paulinism*, ii. 246. <sup>d</sup> McGiffert, p. 186.

<sup>e</sup> Hausrath, iii. 138. <sup>f</sup> Chase, p. 182.

synagogue prove the speech to have its source in actual circumstances, and not in any imaginary situation.<sup>a</sup> And if Luke has given the spirit rather than the exact form, we may be gainers rather than losers. A good painting may tell more of the man portrayed than a photograph can do.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>16</sup> And Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said :—Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, hearken ; <sup>17</sup> The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and lifted up the people when they sojourned in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm led them out of it. <sup>18</sup> And for about forty years he sustained them in the wilderness. <sup>19</sup> And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave their land for an inheritance within about four hundred and fifty years. <sup>20</sup> And, after that, he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. <sup>21</sup> And afterward they asked for a king ; and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for the space of forty years. <sup>22</sup> And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king ; to whom also he bare witness, saying, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who shall do all my will. <sup>23</sup> Of this man's seed hath God according to promise brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus ; <sup>24</sup> John having first proclaimed in preparation for his coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. <sup>25</sup> And as John was finishing his course, he said, What suppose ye that I am ? I am not he. But behold, there cometh one after me, the shoes of whose feet I am not worthy to loose. <sup>26</sup> Brethren, sons of the race of Abraham, and those among you that fear God, to us was the word of this salvation sent forth. <sup>27</sup> For they that dwell at Jerusalem and their rulers, because they knew him not, even fulfilled the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath by giving

<sup>a</sup> Baumgarten, i. 44.

<sup>b</sup> Gardner, p. 396,

sentence ; <sup>28</sup> and though they found no cause for death asked of Pilate that he should be slain. <sup>29</sup> And when they had fulfilled all things that had been written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. <sup>30</sup> But God raised him from the dead : <sup>31</sup> and he was seen for some days longer by them that came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now witnesses of him to the people. <sup>32</sup> And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers, <sup>33</sup> how that God hath fulfilled the same to our children to the utmost, in that he raised up Jesus : as also it is written in the Second Psalm,

Thou art my Son, I have this day begotten thee.

<sup>34</sup> And in token that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to destruction, he thus hath spoken :—

I will give you the holy promises covenanted to David.

<sup>35</sup> Because he saith also in another Psalm,

Thou wilt not give thy Holy One to see destruction.

<sup>36</sup> For David, after he had ministered to his own generation by the counsel of God, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers, and saw destruction : <sup>37</sup> but he, whom God raised up, saw no destruction. <sup>38</sup> Be it therefore known to you, brethren, that through this man is being proclaimed to you remission of sins ; <sup>39</sup> and in him every one that believeth is acquitted from all things, from which ye could not be acquitted by the law of Moses. <sup>40</sup> Beware therefore lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets,

<sup>41</sup> Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish ;

For I work a work in your days,

A work which ye shall in no wise believe, if a man declare it to you.

**16. stood up.** The usual Jewish practice was for the speaker to sit (Luke iv. 20), but the Greek and Roman custom was to stand, and here the population was largely Roman.<sup>a</sup>

**ye that fear God.** The devout Gentiles furnished the most receptive soil for the Gospel, since they had been attracted by Judaism, not as a ceremonial system, but as a lofty conception of God and life. How wide a gap separated them from the mass of the heathen is shown by the way in which Paul here, as in his Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans, is able to assume their intimate acquaintance with the Jewish scriptures.<sup>b</sup>

**hearken.** That to which they were to hearken was the history of their calling. The Jews were not likely to forget that they were not as other nations, but they were in grave danger of forgetting the purpose for which God had chosen them out from the nations. The fact that the race was appointed to do a great work might be written large in their scriptures and yet not be written in their hearts.<sup>c</sup>

**17. God . . . chose.** At the outset he strikes the key-note, the sovereign agency of God. The Israelites did not choose God, but God chose them. God brought them out of Egypt, God led them in the wilderness, God destroyed the nations before them, God gave them Saul, God gave them David, God raised up a Saviour for them, God raised Him from the dead. All through history Paul saw a Figure in the likeness of God.<sup>d</sup>

**this people.** Some commentators<sup>e</sup> refer the word 'this' to the address of the previous verse, as though Paul called the attention of the proselytes to the Jewish portion of the congregation. By thus marshalling the glories of their past before the Gentiles, he would enlist the sympathy of the synagogue. But it is better<sup>f</sup> to refer the word to some mention of Israel in the passage of Scripture just read. It thus furnishes a fresh indication that Luke had a background of facts for his report of this speech.

**18. sustained.** The MSS. are divided between two words, differing in a single letter, meaning respectively 'sustained them' and 'bore with their humours'. The word occurs, with the same variation of reading, in the LXX of Deut. i. 31, which is obviously referred to. The former meaning is preferable, since Paul's point here is not the wilful and refractory temper of the people, but the

<sup>a</sup> Lewin, i. 141.      <sup>b</sup> Gilbert, p. 80; Rendall, *Acts*.      <sup>c</sup> Maurice, p. 198.

<sup>d</sup> Parker, ii. 17; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 112; Maurice, p. 201.

<sup>e</sup> e. g. Fouard, *Paul*, p. 29.      <sup>f</sup> Chase, p. 179.

care of God for them, when they were helpless and unable to support themselves.<sup>a</sup>

**21. of the tribe of Benjamin.** The mention of Saul's tribe and the reticence as to his sin may be due to Paul's innocent pride in the glory of his own ancestry,<sup>b</sup> and so be another indication of the authenticity of the speech.

**22. I have found.** The quotation is interesting for two reasons:—

(i) It is not a formal quotation, but the spirit of two passages—'I have found David my servant' (Ps. lxxxix. 20) and 'the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart' (1 Sam. xiii. 14). But since this application of the Old Testament with the facility of a master hand and the method of half-quotation are characteristic of Paul's Epistles, we get another reason for believing in the authenticity of this speech.<sup>c</sup>

(ii) This union of the same two quotations, with the addition of the words 'to whom he bare witness' and 'the son of Jesse', which are not found in them, occurs in Clem. Cor. xviii. 1—'What shall we say of David, *to whom witness is borne*, unto whom God said, I have found a man after my heart, David, *the son of Jesse*.' This furnishes a strong presumption that the Acts was known at Rome before the end of the first century.<sup>d</sup>

**23. Of this man's seed.** The historical review stops with David, not because later instances of the Divine intervention could not be cited, but because the mention of David opened the way to introduce the story of Jesus.<sup>e</sup>

**25. What suppose ye?** It is interesting to note Paul's familiarity with the teaching of the Baptist, though he does not give the Baptist's words identically with any of the Gospel records (Matt. iii. 11; Mark i. 7; Luke iii. 16; John i. 21, 26).<sup>f</sup>

**27. they that dwell.** Lest they should suspect his message on the ground that the central authorities of their nation had rejected it, he shows how that very rejection of Jesus was the fulfilment of prophecies concerning the Messiah.

**28. found no cause.** As a matter of fact, the Sanhedrin had pronounced Him guilty of blasphemy and deserving of death (Matt. xxvi. 65). But none of the Gospels were yet in existence, and it is not strange if Paul, who had not been in Jerusalem at the time of the

<sup>a</sup> Page, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> Howson, *Scenes*, p. 26.

<sup>c</sup> Howson, *Scenes*, p. 29.

<sup>d</sup> Knowling, *Sermons on Critical Questions*, p. 68.

<sup>e</sup> Fraser, p. 119.

<sup>f</sup> Puives, p. 115; Lewin, i. 142.



Crucifixion, should have been, though familiar with the main outlines, ignorant of unessential details.

29. **they took him down.** This statement also is at variance with the account in the Gospels. It was not the enemies of the Lord who took His body from the Cross and laid it in the tomb. St. Luke himself tells us (xxiii. 53) that this was done by Joseph of Arimathea, and in recording here an account inconsistent with his own Gospel, he shows that he is following some report of Paul's words.<sup>a</sup>

31. **by them that came up.** Another evidence of the genuineness of the speech. Paul allows to the Twelve an office which he could not share. He rests the proof of the Resurrection upon their witness of the Risen Lord amid the scenes of earth. His own sight of the Risen Saviour was different.<sup>b</sup>

33. **raised up.** Two 'raisings' are spoken of—the raising from the dead (ver. 30), and the raising to His throne (ver. 33).<sup>c</sup>

**begotten thee.** That is, acknowledged Thy Sonship by exalting Thee to the Kingdom.

34. **no more to return.** He did not rise, like Lazarus, to die and be again buried. 'Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more' (Rom. vi. 9).

**the holy promises.** The promise to David was that he should have an heir to sit on his throne for ever. To realize such a promise it was necessary that David's heir should be One not liable to death and destruction.<sup>d</sup>

39. **every one that believeth.** We have here the germ of all that is most characteristic in Paul's later teaching. It is the argument of the Epistle to Galatians and Romans in a sentence.<sup>e</sup>

40. **Beware.** The change of tone is evident. The assertion, and that in the hearing of Gentiles, of the insufficiency of the Law to justify grated on some of his hearers, and anger and unbelief were plainly written on their faces. Paul marked their rising passion, and brought his speech to a close with warning words from prophecy. The Jews of Habakkuk's day had refused to believe in the impending invasion by the Chaldæans, and yet it had come.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Chase, p. 184.

<sup>b</sup> Chase, p. 185.

<sup>c</sup> Chase, p. 188.

<sup>d</sup> Stifler, p. 120.

<sup>e</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*; Stifler, p. 120.

<sup>f</sup> Eadie, p. 104; Fraser, p. 127; Binney, p. 150.

## 42-49

<sup>42</sup> Now as they were going out, the congregation besought them that these words might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. <sup>43</sup> And after the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas ; who speaking to them urged them to continue in the grace of God. <sup>44</sup> And the next Sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God. <sup>45</sup> But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and kept contradicting the things which were spoken by Paul, reviling him. <sup>46</sup> And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing that ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup> For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying,

I have set thee for a light to the Gentiles,

That thou shouldst be for salvation to the uttermost part of the earth.

<sup>48</sup> And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God ; and as many as had ranged themselves on the side of eternal life believed. <sup>49</sup> And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region.

42. **besought them.** Others, however, both Jews and Gentiles, were not offended, but were eager to hear him.

43. **to continue.** They were beginning to understand for the first time the true meaning of their national history ; and Paul urged them to retain the impression already made—to see what their calling involved—that it meant that the grace shown to their fathers was with them too.

44. **almost the whole city.** The missionaries must have

laboured during the week among the Gentiles, and these on the next Sabbath not only thronged the synagogue, but apparently gathered in a vast crowd outside.

**45. with jealousy.** The preaching of their own Rabbis had attracted no such notice. And their national pride was also wounded. They might bear to hear of their Law being superseded, but not of being superseded themselves. They were willing to be told that the Messiah was to be 'the glory of His people Israel', but not that He was to be 'a light to lighten the Gentiles'.<sup>a</sup>

**46. It was necessary.** The Jews were to have the first offer. 'Beginning at Jerusalem' had been Christ's direction.

**judge yourselves.** By their action they had pronounced verdict on themselves; by refusing to accept salvation, had declared themselves unworthy of it.

**we turn to the Gentiles.** The meaning is not that Paul now for the first time preached to Gentiles, or that he determined henceforth to preach no more to Jews (the facts negative such an interpretation), but that there, in Antioch, he meant to offer the Gospel without respect of race. Nevertheless, it was a decisive moment. His experience at Antioch forced him to put into words the law of his future action. A conviction in the mind is one thing; the same conviction brought home by facts is another.<sup>b</sup>

**48. were glad.** Gal. iv. 13 seq. shows how warmly they welcomed Paul and with what affection they repaid him. Their joy was not at the offer of Christianity as distinct from Judaism, but at the *free* offer of the Jew's religion without conditions that were almost impossible of acceptance. For while Judaism met the higher instincts of the heathen, it had its repellent side. It entailed burdens and obligations from which they shrank. It was purely national, holding out its hopes only to the seed of Abraham. Even circumcision, from which they specially revolted, gave only partial admission.<sup>c</sup>

**ranged themselves.** A designed contrast to ver. 46, 'Judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life.' They fell in with the Divine order which the Jews rejected.

**49. throughout all the region.** This implies a stay of some months at least, as does also the fact that they left a vigorous Church there.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 83; Simcox, p. 71; Mackenzie, p. 72.

<sup>b</sup> McGiffert, p. 185; Maclaren, ii. 46.

<sup>c</sup> Johnston, p. 84; Baring-Gould, p. 163.

<sup>d</sup> Gilbert, p. 81.

## 50-52

<sup>50</sup> But the Jews urged on the female proselytes of rank and the chief men of the city, and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and cast them out from their borders. <sup>51</sup> But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and went to Iconium. <sup>52</sup> And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

**50. the Jews.** They were not numerous—they had but one synagogue—and it is interesting to see what considerable influence could be exercised by even a few resident Jews upon a heathen community. An inscription, probably of the first century, discovered in Apollonia, shows that Jews of one family had long been citizens of Antioch and held important positions there.<sup>a</sup>

**female proselytes.** The influence of women is a marked feature in the history of the cities of Asia.<sup>b</sup> The dislike to circumcision led to conversions to Judaism being much less numerous among men than among women.<sup>c</sup> Josephus says<sup>d</sup> that ‘almost all’ the women in Damascus were proselytes.

**the chief men.** Probably unofficial Romans are meant, though the Greek word may denote Praetors. The Roman authorities were always ready to deal promptly with any who disturbed the public peace. Thus ‘perils from their own countrymen and perils from the Gentiles’ (2 Cor. xi. 26) followed ‘perils of rivers and perils of robbers’. There can be little doubt that they were scourged by the lictors before being expelled. The three floggings with rods alluded to in 2 Cor. xi. 25 can only have been inflicted in Roman colonies.<sup>e</sup>

Luke’s account of what happened at Antioch is typical of his method. His aim was not to give the history either of individuals or of Churches. In the case of each city he asks only, What reception did the missionaries meet with among the Jews? What among the Gentiles? What from the Roman authorities? How long did they stay? What was the manner of their departure?<sup>f</sup>

**51. shook off.** As a protest against the injustice which cast

<sup>a</sup> Lewin, i. p. xxviii; Ramsay, *Cities*, p. 256.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Churches*, p. 67.

<sup>c</sup> Renan, *Paul*, p. 77.

<sup>d</sup> *Bell. Jud.* II. xx. 2.

<sup>e</sup> Ramsay, *Expositor*, Nov. 1907.

<sup>f</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, Introd. p. xxx.

them out. The sandal was taken off and the dust shaken out as a symbolic token that the very soil of the country was defiling.

**Iconium.** Sixty miles distant to the east along the Roman military road.

52. **And.** We should have expected 'But'. It looks as though verses 50 and 51 were inserted by Luke from a different source. Verse 52 follows naturally on verse 49.<sup>a</sup>

**filled with joy.** The same note is struck as at viii. 8. The Acts throbs with wonder at the new gift which Pentecost brought. The Jews might be 'filled with jealousy' (ver. 46); the disciples were 'filled with joy'. Though they were but just won from heathenism, raw, ignorant, unfit to stand alone; though those who had brought them the glad tidings were being violently expelled; the disciples were filled with joy.<sup>b</sup>

## CHAPTER XIV

### I-7

<sup>1</sup> And it came to pass in Iconium that they entered in like manner into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed. <sup>2</sup> But the Jews that were disbelieving stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and made them hostile to the brethren. <sup>3</sup> Long time therefore they tarried, speaking boldly in reliance on the Lord, who bare witness to the word of his grace by granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. <sup>4</sup> But the multitude of the city was divided, and part held with the Jews and part with the Apostles. <sup>5</sup> And when there was a movement made both by the Gentiles and by the Jews with their rulers to treat them evilly and to stone them, <sup>6</sup> they became aware of it, and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the region round about. <sup>7</sup> And there they preached the glad tidings.

<sup>a</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.* p. 45.

<sup>b</sup> Maclaren, ii. 56.



1. **Iconium.** Famous, under its later name of Konieh, in the time of the Crusades. It was a Greek city; not, like Pisidian Antioch, a Roman colony. At the death of Augustus in B.C. 36 it had been incorporated in the Roman province of Galatia, but was not made a colony till the reign of Hadrian. Situated in a fertile district, and on the Roman road from Cilicia to the west, it was an important place from both a commercial and a military point of view.<sup>a</sup>

It was here that Paul converted Thekla. Her 'Acts', as it has come down to us, belongs to the latter part of the second century, and is not in its original form; but its nucleus is a very early document, probably of much the same date as Luke's Acts: and it is generally accepted as giving a substantially true narrative of an incident of Paul's ministry at Iconium. Although it is marked by some of the characteristics of the Apocryphal literature, many of the details have historical probability, especially as the doctrinal motive is in the background.<sup>b</sup> One detail of great interest is the description of Paul's personal appearance, which may well rest on a true tradition—'bald, bow-legged, strongly built, small in stature; with large eyes and meeting eyebrows and longish nose; full of grace; sometimes looking like a man, sometimes having the face of an angel'. This description is more or less confirmed by the figure of Paul in a fourth-century ivory diptych.<sup>c</sup>

**the synagogue.** Apparently one synagogue sufficed for the Jewish population. The Apostles, though they had broken with the Jews at Antioch, did not depart from their practice of preaching first to them.

**so spake.** Nor did they modify their preaching so as to mitigate opposition. Since many Jews believed, they may have preached the Gospel as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy; since many Gentiles also believed, they must have taught that the Gospel was for all nations.<sup>d</sup>

2. **stirred up.** As Iconium was a self-governing Greek city, the Jewish appeal was to the mass of the people. On this occasion they harassed, not the preachers, but their converts—made 'the brethren' bear the brunt of the attack. The feeling of caste prejudice in the Jew and the Gentile respectively, though it might keep them

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Churches*, p. 45; *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Iconium.

<sup>b</sup> Baring-Gould, p. 170; *Church Review*, July, 1893.

<sup>c</sup> Depicted in Lewin, ii. 211.

<sup>d</sup> Watson, p. 90; Eadie, p. 115.

apart from one another, would unite them against those who preached a religion which levelled all distinctions.<sup>a</sup>

3. **Long time.** These words imply that they stayed at Iconium longer than at Antioch ; probably for at least six months.<sup>b</sup>

**therefore.** The connexion is obscure, and verse 3 may be an early insertion, since verse 4 follows naturally on verse 2.<sup>c</sup> If it is genuine, the meaning will be that this unprincipled opposition determined them to stay and confront it. They knew when to retreat, and when to stand their ground. Now, when the attack was on their friends, they would not leave in the lurch those whom acceptance of their message had brought into straits.<sup>d</sup>

**the word of his grace.** They spoke of Jesus as the source of grace to men. And He showed that He was what they declared Him to be, by enabling them to do acts of grace to men, to make them feel that an invisible Helper, the enemy of disease and death, was near.<sup>e</sup>

4. **the Apostles.** The title is used not only in the special sense of the Twelve, but in a wider sense (John xiii. 16, 2 Cor. viii. 23) of men 'sent forth' by the Church and the Holy Spirit, as Barnabas and Saul had been sent. So St. Paul applies it to James the Lord's brother (Gal. i. 19), to Epaphroditus (Phil. ii. 25), to Silvanus (1 Thess. ii. 6), to Andronicus and Junias (Rom. xvi. 67), and speaks of 'false Apostles' (2 Cor. xi. 13). But since the title is in the Acts restricted to the Twelve, except here and in verse 14, it looks as though Luke were using here some written account of this tour.

5. **a movement.** No assault was actually made, but a plan of action was formed, in which the Jews were the leaders, as is shown by stoning being part of the plot. The words 'treat them evilly' in all probability implies a scourging in the synagogue.

6. **cities of Lycaonia.** Ramsay has conclusively disproved the assertion of Farrar that by going to Lycaonia they were exchanging one jurisdiction for another. Lystra and Derbe were in that part of Lycaonia which was incorporated in the province of Galatia, just as Iconium was in that part of Phrygia which was similarly incorporated. Thus Paul followed his usual plan of confining his preaching to the centres of Roman life and influence. Lystra was at this time no longer a rude village, but an important garrison town, having been made a Roman colony in B.C. 6, as is known from an inscription

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Expositor*, Nov. 1907; Maclaren, ii. 50; Maurice, p. 215.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Churches*, p. 67.

<sup>c</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 108.

<sup>d</sup> Maclaren, ii. 51.

<sup>e</sup> Maurice, p. 217.

discovered in 1885. And Derbe was the frontier city on the south-east, and so of military importance, but less is known of it than of any of the cities visited by St. Paul. Since there is no mention of a synagogue at either place, the Jews cannot have been numerous.<sup>a</sup>

7. **there they preached.** In these words much history is narrated with epigrammatic brevity. Now for the first time the Gospel came into direct contact with heathenism, without the preparation of Jewish proselytism. But though there was no synagogue through which they could introduce their message, there was at least one Jewish family—that of Eunice, with her mother Lois and her son Timothy—with whom Paul may have lodged (xvi. 1).<sup>b</sup>

## 8-18

<sup>8</sup> And at Lystra a certain man was sitting, impotent in his feet, who had been a cripple from his mother's womb and had never walked. <sup>9</sup> He was listening to Paul speaking; who, fastening his eyes upon him, and seeing that he had faith to be made whole, <sup>10</sup> said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped up and began to walk. <sup>11</sup> And when the multitude saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice, saying in Lycaonian, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. <sup>12</sup> And they called Barnabas Zeus; and Paul Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. <sup>13</sup> And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was before the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and would have offered sacrifice with the multitude. <sup>14</sup> But when the Apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they rent their garments and sprang forth into the crowd, crying out, <sup>15</sup> and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like nature with you, and bring you good tidings that ye should turn from these vanities to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them; <sup>16</sup> who in the

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Churches*, pp. 44, 57, and *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Lystra.

<sup>b</sup> Merivale, p. 158; Norris, p. 66.

generations past suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways. <sup>17</sup> Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, working good and giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness. <sup>18</sup> And speaking thus they with difficulty restrained the crowd from offering sacrifice to them.

8. **Lystra.** Eighteen miles from Iconium. Its site, which was uncertain, has recently been clearly identified.

**was sitting.** Apparently (ver. 13) outside the gate of the city.<sup>a</sup> The vivid account which follows may be due to Timothy, who was probably an eyewitness (see on xvi. 1),<sup>b</sup> but the wording must be Luke's, since the parallel with the narrative of the cure of the cripple by Peter (iii. 1-10) cannot be denied and is too close to be undesigned. Not only is the main result the same, but the adjuncts and even the expressions are almost identical.<sup>c</sup> Thus :—

iii. 2. A certain man was being  
carried, that was lame  
from his mother's womb.

iii. 4. Peter, fastening his eyes  
upon him.

iii. 8. leaping up, he stood and  
began to walk.

xiv. 8. A certain man was sitting,  
impotent in his feet, who  
had been a cripple from  
his mother's womb.

xiv. 9. who, fastening his eyes  
upon him.

xiv. 10. he leaped up and began  
to walk.

9. **was listening.** He may have heard rumours of the signs and wonders wrought at Iconium (ver. 3). And doubtless Paul had been telling of Jesus and His deeds of mercy and healing—how He had made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak and the lame to walk—and of His willingness to bless those who had faith. And it all came home to the poor cripple, as he lay there listening in deep consciousness of his one great need, and his eyes were lit with a new-born hope.

11. **in Lycaonian.** Paul must have preached in Greek, and they would understand that language; but ordinarily they would use their native tongue, and they naturally employed it now in their

<sup>a</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 223.

<sup>b</sup> Rendall, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> Zeller, ii. 6.

excitement. The Apostles appear to have retired (ver. 14) after the cure. It was not ignorance of the dialect which prevented them from knowing what was happening.<sup>a</sup>

**The gods are come down.** Among this rude people the ancient faith remained unweakened, and the legends, which had become dim to the sceptics of Greece and Rome, still found credence. And, indeed, the story shows how deep lies the longing for the manifestation of Divinity in the form of humanity; how old and instinctive is the belief that to cure human misery is a Godlike work; that, if there is a God, He is sure to draw near to men in their own likeness. Thus the legends of paganism are unconscious prophecies—witnesses of the deep, unsatisfied longing to which the Incarnation of Christ is the answer.<sup>b</sup>

**12. they called.** The scene of the old legend, according to which Zeus and Hermes came to earth and were entertained by Baucis and Philemon (Ovid, *Met.* viii. 611 seq.), was laid in this neighbourhood. An inscription of the first century found at Baluklaou, a short distance south of Lystra, records the dedication of a statue of Hermes to Zeus by men with Lycaonian names. As there was a temple of Zeus at the gate of Lystra (ver. 13), he was their tutelary god; and when they saw the miracle, they supposed that he was once more paying them a visit.<sup>c</sup>

**because he was the chief speaker.** The words are probably an early gloss. It is more likely that, while the part of Zeus was assigned to Barnabas, as the more dignified personality (Paul implies in 2 Cor. x. 10 that his own appearance was not striking), Paul was identified with Hermes, not because he was the chief speaker and Hermes was the god of eloquence, but because Hermes was the companion of Zeus in the legend.

**13. before the city.** At Claudiopolis in Isauria, south-east from Lystra, an inscription has been found recording a dedication to 'Zeus before the city'.<sup>d</sup>

**oxen.** The animals usually sacrificed to Zeus. The garlands were for wreathing the horns of the victims.<sup>e</sup>

**the gates.** That is, the city gates. The plural would not be used of the gate to a house, nor would the narrow streets of an Oriental town lend themselves to a sacrifice. Probably the lame

<sup>a</sup> Rendall, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> Maurice, p. 218; Maclaren, ii. 65, 75.

<sup>c</sup> Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, p. 280; Buss, p. 260.

<sup>d</sup> Ramsay, *Expositor*, IV. vi. 293.

<sup>e</sup> Benson, p. 327.



man had been laid at the city gate and a crowd was already assembled before the temple for a religious festival (see on ver. 17), so that the priest, the oxen, and the garlands would all be ready.<sup>a</sup>

**14. Barnabas and Paul.** It is a touch of accuracy that the old order of the names is suddenly reverted to (see on xv. 12). Barnabas, being taken for Zeus, their tutelary god, naturally received the precedence in the eyes of the Lystraeans.

**heard.** They had gone to their lodging after healing the lame man, and hurried forth on learning what was going on. The scene that follows has been depicted by Raphael in a famous cartoon.<sup>b</sup>

**rent their garments.** Some men, holding that the end justifies the means, might have winked at this mistake, in order to win a hearing for their message. What (they might say) does it matter if we are called Zeus and Hermes, since these are but empty names? Is it not true that God has come down in the likeness of man? And may we not lead these ignorant heathen by degrees from ourselves to Him? But the horror of idolatry, their inheritance from a hundred generations, flamed up at the bare thought of being themselves made objects of worship. So far from being there to receive Divine honours, they were come for the expressly opposite purpose of turning men from such 'vanities'.<sup>c</sup>

**15. and saying.** Luke may have received an account of this speech from Paul himself, on whose memory this perilous episode in his missionary life would be stamped with special clearness. It is full of coincidences, both in argument and in expression, with passages in his epistles (compare ver. 15 with 1 Thess. i. 9; ver. 16 with Rom. iii. 25; ver. 17 with Rom. i. 19, 20). And the fact that it contains nothing that is distinctively Christian is evidence of its essential genuineness, since no forger would have invented a Pauline speech destitute of all reference to Christ. But just as Paul had preached Christianity to the Jews as the completion of Judaism, appealing to their scriptures, so he preached it to the heathen as the completion of natural religion, appealing to those intuitions which form God's earliest revelation to the human mind.<sup>d</sup>

**these vanities.** He points to the heathen temple with its statue. The Greek word is commonly employed in the LXX to denote 'false gods'.

<sup>a</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> Blass, *Acts*; Ball, p. 45.

<sup>c</sup> Binney, p. 162; Parker, ii. 53; Maurice, p. 219; Maclaren, ii. 68.

<sup>d</sup> Chase, pp. 195, 203; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 150; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 138.

17. **giving you rain.** Paul does not speak about 'laws of nature', as though they administered themselves. He sees a 'living God' behind the drama of the physical world.

These words sound like a fragment of dithyrambic verse. If (see on ver. 13) a religious festival was being celebrated, it would be characteristic of Paul, with his happy knack of utilizing the circumstances of the moment, to quote the words from a lyric hymn which had just been sung as the procession moved to the temple.<sup>a</sup>

## 19-23

<sup>19</sup> But there came after them Jews from Antioch and Iconium; who having won over the multitude stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. <sup>20</sup> But when the disciples had gathered round him, he rose up and went into the city: and on the morrow he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. <sup>21</sup> And when they had preached the glad tidings to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch, <sup>22</sup> confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and warning them that we must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>23</sup> And when they had appointed them elders in every Church, they prayed with fasting, and commended them to the Lord on whom they had believed.

19. **there came after them.** The narrative seems to imply that these Jews came in consequence of the news of the miraculous cure of the cripple having reached Iconium and Antioch, distant respectively about twenty and eighty miles. If so, some interval must have elapsed before their arrival, and this would explain the mention of 'disciples' (ver. 20). And it would furnish a signal illustration of the bitterness and tenacity of Jewish hatred which could supply the motive for so long and arduous a journey. But it is more likely that the revulsion of feeling among the Lystraean followed closely upon the discovery of their mistake, and

<sup>a</sup> Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 148; Farrar, ii. 384.

that these Jews came upon the scene by an opportune accident. It has been suggested<sup>a</sup> that they may have been corn merchants, travelling after the harvest.

**having won over.** It was with the servant as with the Master—‘Hosanna’ one day, ‘Crucify him’ the next. Such revulsions of feeling are common with ignorant and impulsive people. The natives of Melita took Paul first for a murderer and then for a god (xxviii. 4 seq.). And these people were notoriously fickle. Aristotle speaks<sup>b</sup> of ‘Lycaonian treachery’ as proverbial. The Jews no doubt ascribed the miracle, as they had done those of Jesus, to the powers of darkness; and the annoyance of the people, and especially of the priest of Zeus, was naturally great. They did not relish being told that their supposed gods were a pair of vagrant Jews, and turned vindictively on the men whom they regarded as the cause that they had stultified themselves.<sup>c</sup>

**stoned Paul.** As the chief speaker, he bore the brunt of their anger. Barnabas, being less prominent, escaped, as Silas did later on at Beroea (xvii. 14). Thus the Jews accomplished at Lystra what they had meditated at Iconium (ver. 5). It was an experience which Paul never forgot. He may have owed to it some of those scars to which he alludes (Gal. vi. 17) as proof that he was Christ’s branded slave. Years after, ‘once was I stoned’ stands out in solitary pre-eminence in the catalogue of his sufferings (2 Cor. xi. 25). We can scarcely doubt that, as the stones rained on him, his thoughts travelled back to the day when the stoners of Stephen had ‘laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul’ (vii. 58).<sup>d</sup>

**dragged him out of the city.** A touch of truth. Stephen had been hurried out of the city before he was put to death (vii. 58). But the Jews would hold that a Gentile city could not be polluted by such a murder, as the holy Jerusalem would have been. Since, however, the riotous proceeding might involve them in difficulties with the authorities, they dragged what they thought was the dead body without the walls.<sup>e</sup>

**supposing him to be dead.** The cautious statement stands in contrast to the emphasis laid on the miracle in ver. 8. Luke does not say that Paul was dead, or that anything miraculous happened,

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Churches*, p. 69.

<sup>b</sup> Schol. on Hom. *Il.* iv. 88.

<sup>c</sup> Vaughan, ii. 194; Eadie, p. 137; Norris, 67; Haweis, p. 78; Kitto, p. 290.

<sup>d</sup> Conybeare and Howson, i. 185; Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 150; Benson, p. 330.

<sup>e</sup> Eadie, p. 136; Rackham, *Acts*.

though he undoubtedly gives the impression of an extraordinary recovery.<sup>a</sup>

Paul's allusion to this stoning in 2 Cor. xi. 25, by confirming part of this account, affords evidence of the truth of the incidents which led to it. And Luke's narrative explains what would otherwise be inexplicable—how a man could live to say 'once was I stoned'; for stoning was a form of capital punishment from which people did not escape with their lives. But this stoning was not a judicial proceeding. The Roman magistrates would not have allowed any but themselves to inflict death. It was the act of a tumultuous gathering; and the actors would not care to linger on the spot till the authorities appeared.<sup>b</sup>

20. While his would-be murderers fled, some of his converts had the courage to remain, meaning doubtless to give what they thought was his dead body burial, as devout Jews had in similar circumstances buried Stephen (viii. 2). As no disciples have previously been mentioned, we have a warning against trusting to the 'argument from silence'.<sup>c</sup> Among them may have been Timothy, who would be at this time a boy of about fifteen, and was not likely soon to forget the scene (cf. 2 Tim. iii. 11).

**on the morrow.** A splendid illustration of Paul's fortitude. Roused from apparent death, he struggled back to the city, bruised and shaken; and next morning started on a forty miles' journey to face fresh scenes of toil and danger.<sup>d</sup>

21. **made many disciples.** It looks as though they stayed some months at Derbe. No opposition is mentioned as occurring there. Paley points <sup>e</sup> to the omission of Derbe in the list of places (2 Tim. iii. 11) associated in Paul's mind with persecution. They had apparently got beyond the region where Jewish influence was formidable. Even at Lystra Jews must have been few and lax, if a devout Jewess could marry a Greek and allow her son to be uncircumcised.<sup>f</sup>

**they returned.** Derbe was the frontier city of the province, and they probably did not wish to go beyond Roman territory.<sup>g</sup> The most direct route to Syrian Antioch involved crossing the Taurus range—a difficult task in winter—and passing out of Roman territory into the kingdom of Antiochus. These reasons alone might lead them to retrace their steps. But no doubt they also felt that much was needed to render their past work effective. They had been

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 120; Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> Johnston, p. 88.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, ii. 72.

<sup>d</sup> F. B. Meyer, p. 89.

<sup>e</sup> *Horae Paulinae*.

<sup>f</sup> Simcox, p. 72.

<sup>g</sup> Ramsay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Derbe.

driven by persecution from each city, and had had no opportunity of confirming their converts in the faith. A passing proclamation of the Gospel was not enough for Paul. He aimed at founding organized communities. So they went back to Lystra, where Paul had been stoned; to Iconium, where their lives had been threatened; to Antioch, whence they had been expelled. Truly they 'counted not their lives dear unto them'. But their danger would be lessened by the fact that new magistrates would have come into office in all the three towns since their previous visit; and it is probable that they did not again preach in the synagogues, but avoided publicity, devoting themselves entirely to the converts already made.<sup>a</sup>

**22. confirming the souls.** Their task was now not to convert, but to confirm; the seed sown must be watered. These disciples had just come out of heathenism; had as yet only a slight hold on the truths of the Gospel; were surrounded by those who would both sneer at, and argue against, their belief.<sup>b</sup> Probably they were already suffering for their faith. And harder to bear than persecution from Jew or heathen must have been the rupture of family ties and old friendships which almost inevitably followed conversion.

**we must.** The pronoun is not personal, but general. It means 'we Christians'. It does not therefore here imply Luke's presence. But it shows that he associated himself with the principle, as one who realized its truth from experience.<sup>c</sup>

**through many tribulations.** Paul did not, as he told the elders at Miletus (xx. 20), keep back the truth from his converts. He frankly prepared them for the ordeal before them—did not display the Eshcol clusters of the promised land without telling them of the Anakim, who had to be met and overcome before the inheritance could be theirs. Similarly, Jesus had plainly told His disciples what to expect:—'In the world ye shall have tribulation' (John xvi. 33).<sup>d</sup>

**23. appointed.** The Greek word is often used generally of any kind of appointment. For instance, in x. 41, where it is a case of Divine choice, there can be no idea of popular election. But strictly the word implies election by vote, and it probably means this here, as it certainly does in 2 Cor. viii. 19. Thus the Apostles, as men of sense, allowed the disciples, who would know the fittest men, to nominate the elders, and then confirmed their choice.

<sup>a</sup> *Church Review*, July, 1893; Lewin, i. 153; Wrede, p. 56; Iverach, p. 57; McGiffert, p. 191.

<sup>b</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 151.

<sup>c</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 123.

<sup>d</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 153.



**elders.** This is the first mention of the formal appointment of these officers, though their existence in the Church at Jerusalem has been incidentally mentioned (xi. 30). There can be little doubt that the synagogue formed the model for the organization of the Christian Church. It was an institution which had arisen under the Dispersion, and was entirely distinct from the Temple, having no altar or sacrifices or priests, but a ministry not Levitical under the control of elders.<sup>a</sup> The significance of the appointment of Christian elders lies in the proof which it furnishes that the Christian communities were independent of the synagogue. It is not easy to say what was the relation of Jewish converts to the synagogue. Probably their desire to avoid a complete severance of old social ties had much to do with the later difficulties which arose in the Galatian Churches.<sup>b</sup>

## 24-28

<sup>24</sup> And they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. <sup>25</sup> And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attaleia; <sup>26</sup> and thence sailed away to Antioch, whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. <sup>27</sup> And when they were come and had gathered the Church together, they reported all that God had done working with them, and that he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. <sup>28</sup> And they remained no little time with the disciples.

**25. in Perga.** So far their work on the return journey had been to confirm their previous converts. But at Perga, which they had merely passed through on their previous visit (xiii. 14), they preached. Apparently there were no important results, since we never hear of Paul revisiting the city.

**to Attaleia.** Perga was some miles up the Cestus. Finding no ship sailing to Antioch, they crossed the plain to Attaleia, the chief city of Pamphylia, sixteen miles distant. That they did not revisit Cyprus looks as though they had founded no churches there. Probably their converts had been only Jews and proselytes.

**27. gathered the Church together.** This was the first 'mis-

<sup>a</sup> Norris, p. 141.

<sup>b</sup> Johnston, p. 90.

sionary meeting' in history. Doubtless there was great eagerness to hear their report. Their mission had been, in a sense, an experiment. The suitability of the Gospel to become the religion of the world had not before been put to the test.<sup>a</sup>

**a door.** The metaphor occurs three times in Paul's Epistles (1 Cor. xvi. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12; Col. iv. 3), and nowhere else in the New Testament. It looks as if we had here a reminiscence of the actual expression used by him in his narrative of his mission.

**28. no little time.** Ramsay places at this point the visit of Peter to Antioch and his rebuke by Paul (Gal. ii. 12). But see note on xv. 35.

## CHAPTER XV

**THE JUDAIZERS.** To the Church at Antioch the success of the mission was matter of unmixed rejoicing. But there were others who did not regard it in the same light. One member of the expedition, John Mark, had, some time before, taken to Jerusalem a report of Paul's proceedings, doubtless not uncoloured by the scruples which had led him to leave the party.<sup>b</sup> There had been from the first many in the Church at Jerusalem who, though they accepted Jesus as the Messiah, still insisted on the permanent obligation of the ceremonial law. The jealousy of the unbelieving Jews in foreign cities, excited by Paul's preaching to Gentiles, was only the more unrestrained expression of the feelings of these Christian Jews. That this controversy broke out now shows that his action in the matter of circumcision had changed during his work in Galatia. He can scarcely have adopted the same attitude during the years of his preaching in Cilicia, when, as he tells us (Gal. i. 24), the brethren in Judaea, hearing of his work, 'praised God' for him. And the discovery that the Christian Church, instead of being, as heretofore, a society of Jews with a sprinkling of Gentiles, was to be henceforth a vast society of Gentiles with here and there a sprinkling of Jews, kindled their suspicions into open hostility. Christianity, in place of being the purest form of Judaism, was becoming a universal religion in which the Jewish element would be absorbed and lost.<sup>c</sup>

Emissaries from this party consequently now appeared at Antioch; and from the circumstance that the Church at Jerusalem addressed

<sup>a</sup> Briggs, p. 290.

<sup>b</sup> Bacon, p. 105.

<sup>c</sup> Simcox, p. 73; Watson, p. 98; L. Merivale, p. 164; Hausrath, iii. 164; Stanley, p. 194; Conybeare and Howson, i. 198.

their letter to the brethren in Syria and Cilicia (ver. 23) we may infer that these Judaizers did not confine their attentions to Antioch. Paul's strong language about them—'false brethren, secretly introduced, who sneaked in to spy out our liberty' (Gal. ii. 4)—is probably coloured by resentment. He regarded them as in no true sense Christians, but Jews pretending belief in Jesus. But Luke says merely that 'certain men from Judaea' came and insisted on Gentile circumcision, though he implies (ver. 24) that they claimed a delegation from the Church at Jerusalem which had never really been granted them.<sup>a</sup>

We may blame their narrowness, but we must try to understand their feeling. It was to them not a matter only of national pride, but of conscience. They honestly believed that God required Christians to be circumcised. And there were facts which seemed to support their contention. They had their texts to appeal to. The Jews had been separated by God's will from other nations in order that they might keep a heritage of truth for the benefit of all the world; that in Abraham's seed all the families of the earth might be blessed. If all nations were to be blessed in Jesus, yet the word was to go forth from Sion. If the light was to lighten the Gentiles, yet the Old Testament always assigned them an inferior place in the Kingdom. Did not Isaiah predict (lxi. 5) that the sons of the alien should be ploughmen and vine-dressers to the Jew? The Law had been given by God, and nothing had been said of its transitory character. Jesus had not formally abrogated it for His disciples. On the contrary, He said that He came, not to destroy, but to fulfil it, and that not one jot or tittle of it should pass away (Matt. v. 17 seq.). He had Himself observed it, had kept the Passover, had paid the Temple-tax, had told the healed leper to offer the prescribed gifts, had said that He was not sent 'save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel', and that it was 'not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs' (Matt. xv. 24, 26).<sup>b</sup>

And if it was not strange that the Judaizers failed to see that the profound spirituality of Jesus itself involved in course of time the supersession of the unspiritual ceremonial law, their mistake with regard to circumcision was yet more excusable. For a still stronger case could be made out for its necessity than for the observance of the Mosaic Law. It had been instituted by God Himself. It was

<sup>a</sup> Lange, *Acts*; Hausrath, iii. 169; Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 66.

<sup>b</sup> Wrede, p. 63; Fraser, p. 199; Huntington, p. 39; Gilbert, p. 94; Stifler, p. 131.

before the Law. It dated from Abraham. It was the necessary sign of belonging to the covenant. 'This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee—every man-child shall be circumcised' (Gen. xvii. 10). No words could be plainer. When had the requirement been abrogated? Did Christ repeal it? On the contrary, He submitted to the rite. His Apostles had all been circumcised; so had St. Paul himself been. True, there was the case of Cornelius, whose admission as an uncircumcised convert the Church at Jerusalem had recognized. But that was an exception which proved the rule. A similar concession ought only to be granted when there was a similar Divine revelation and a similar extraordinary bestowal of the Holy Spirit. Nor was the present issue the same. What had then been accepted was that God had granted life to the Gentiles. Now the question was the condition of their admission. A distinction must be drawn between the conversion of the uncircumcised and the toleration of uncircumcision in converts.<sup>a</sup>

We know from Paul's Epistles the kind of answer which he gave. Circumcision, like every typical rite, had a spiritual significance. When the spiritual purpose is realized, the symbol is done away—not violently ended, but abolished, as manhood abolishes infancy. With circumcision of the heart, circumcision of the flesh vanishes. The Christian has entered into the consecration which it implied: he does not cut the flesh, but gives the life.<sup>b</sup>

Two thoughts are suggested by this controversy:—

(i) People often talk vaguely of the harmony which prevailed in the early Church, as though the days of primitive Christianity were days of peace and unity, and it was only in these latter days that the Church of Christ has been divided. But we misread the history of the Acts and of the Epistles, if we fail to see that the wonderful expansion of the new faith did not come without a severe struggle within the Church itself, a struggle often bitter.<sup>c</sup>

(ii) To us it seems pitiful that a fleshly rite such as circumcision should have been gravely regarded as essential to salvation. But the errors of the Judaizers are the errors of human nature. Christianity has never been without men who taught conditions of salvation quite as irrational. The terms vary, but the dispute is the same. The controversy at Antioch was a conflict between the ritualistic and the spiritual, the traditional and the progressive, the fettering and the free.

<sup>a</sup> Pfeleiderer, *Hibbert*, p. 25; Maurice, p. 232; Iverach, p. 59; Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 65; Simcox, p. 78.

<sup>b</sup> Parker, ii. 108 seq.

<sup>c</sup> Norris, p. 70; J. Robertson, p. 99.

And it was only the first of a long series of controversies between the type of Christianity which relies on external observances and that which holds the sole condition of salvation to be faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>a</sup> That Judaism, which was the cradle of Christianity, did not become its grave is due, under God, to Paul. If the conditions of salvation are now clearly defined as repentance towards God and faith in Christ, we owe it to the courage and clear grasp of principles with which he contended for the truth.<sup>b</sup>

*Is this visit to Jerusalem the same as that recorded in Galatians ii?*

The first three visits mentioned in the Acts are :—

- A. After the flight from Damascus, ix. 26.
- B. Carrying relief from Antioch, xi. 30.
- C. For the Conference, xv. 2.

Two visits are mentioned in Galatians :—

- (a) 'After three years' from his conversion, i. 18.
- (b) 'Fourteen years after,' ii. 1.

It is agreed that (a) and A are identical. But is (b) to be identified with B or with C?

Many in recent times<sup>c</sup> have sought to identify it with B. The most important arguments in favour of this course are the following :—

(1) Paul says that the visit of Gal. ii was the second; and he could not have omitted all reference to the visit of Acts xi without exposing himself to a charge of falsehood.

(2) Paul says (Gal. ii. 3) that he was accompanied by Titus. But, while he might have taken the uncircumcised Titus as an assistant in the work of administering the relief, to have taken him to the Conference would have been a blunder impossible in a man so tactful, so ready to consider prejudices and to avoid causing unnecessary irritation.<sup>d</sup>

(3) There are serious discrepancies between Gal. ii and Acts xv, if both are accounts of the same visit. For instance, the conferences are in Galatians private ones between Paul and a few of the leaders; those in the Acts are public gatherings of the Church.

In answer it may be said :—

(1) Apart from the fact that Paul does not say 'I went up for the second time', but 'I went up again', this argument rests on the assumption that Gal. ii continues the reasoning of Gal. i. But it is

<sup>a</sup> Fraser, p. 135; Ropes, p. 91.

<sup>b</sup> F. B. Meyer, p. 103.

<sup>c</sup> e. g. Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 48 seq.; *Expositor*, v. iii.

<sup>d</sup> Baring-Gould, p. 196.



not so. Paul is proving in ch. i that he was independent of the Apostles; he had been preaching for two years before he met any one of the Twelve. In ch. ii he is meeting a charge that he was not an Apostle, and that he preached a Gospel which the Apostles disapproved: and he shows that at a later visit they recognized his Apostleship and sanctioned his Gospel.<sup>a</sup>

(2) Though Paul was unquestionably tactful, he was not a man to do things by halves. Feeling that a convert was the best argument, he took Titus to the Conference as a living witness that uncircumcised Gentiles could be equally partakers of the Divine Spirit. It was a definite challenge that the question whether an uncircumcised Christian was to be received as a brother should be answered. And the challenge was taken up. The Judaizers demanded that Titus should be circumcised; and Paul withstood the demand successfully (Gal. iii. 3).

(3) The discrepancies admit of explanation. Luke's information about the Conference came from without—from some one who had been present at the public meetings. Paul wrote from within of things known only to a few. Luke may not even have heard of the private interviews. In complicated and difficult negotiations two very different representations may both be true.<sup>b</sup> Further, Luke and Paul were concerned with different questions. Luke was thinking of the rights of the Gentiles, which was the subject before the public Conference. Paul was writing about his Apostleship, and the understanding to which he alludes was reached in private.<sup>c</sup> And while both accounts may accurately record the facts, both may require allowance to be made for some heightening of the colour. Luke was anxious to minimize any differences between the Apostles and Paul. Paul was writing to the Galatians in a moment of passionate feeling, with the definite aim of establishing his independence of the Twelve.<sup>d</sup>

But there are further reasons for declining to identify (δ) with B.

(4) Paul, who in Gal. ii goes to Jerusalem as a leader to confer with the Apostles, is in Acts xi subordinate to Barnabas; and Barnabas, who in the Acts is in the first place, is in Galatians in the background.

(5) Paul in Galatians is, as Apostle to the Gentiles, on a level

<sup>a</sup> Godet, p. 98.

<sup>b</sup> Sanday, *Expositor*, v. iii. 90; Lechler, i. 198; Findlay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Paul.

<sup>c</sup> Thiersch, p. 122; Godet, p. 104.

<sup>d</sup> Wrede, p. 67.

with Peter, the Apostle to the Circumcision. But at the time of Acts xi. 30 his first missionary journey had not been undertaken.

(6) If the concordat of Gal. ii had been reached in A.D. 44, the Apostles had already conceded the liberty which Paul sought at the Conference; and it is not likely that the question would have been re-opened, or that, if it were re-opened, no reference should have been made at the Conference to the previous agreement.<sup>a</sup>

(7) Finally, the chronology is decisive. The position which the account of Herod's death occupies between Acts xi. 30 and xii. 25 makes it clear that Luke at any rate thought that the visit of xi. 30 took place in A.D. 43 or 44; that is, much less than 'fourteen years' after Saul's conversion (Gal. ii. 1), which cannot possibly be thrown back to A.D. 30.<sup>b</sup>

On the other hand, the reasons for identifying (*b*) with C appear to be overwhelming. There is a wonderful correspondence in all important points between Gal. ii and Acts xv. The controversy is the same; the immediate occasion (the efforts of the Judaizers) is the same; the chief actors (Paul and Barnabas, Peter and James) are the same; there is the same appeal by Paul to his success among the Gentiles; the same loyal recognition of his work; and the same decision in favour of liberty. No minor discrepancies can outweigh this substantial coincidence.<sup>c</sup>

In one way only can the visit of Gal. ii be identified with that of Acts xi, and that is by identifying both with the visit to the Conference in Acts xv. It is conceivable that Luke had before him two accounts of the Conference visit; one from a Judaic source, speaking of 'Barnabas and Saul' (xi. 30), and another from an Antiochean source, speaking of 'Paul and Barnabas' (xv. 2); and that he wrongly supposed them to relate to different occasions. Certainly, the similarities are remarkable. Both visits are made by Paul (*a*) in consequence of the arrival of men from Jerusalem; (*b*) in company with Barnabas; (*c*) from Antioch; (*d*) under commission from the Church; and (*e*) both are followed by the appearance of Mark at Antioch (xii. 25, xv. 37). Such a hypothesis, however, though tenable, is unnecessary.<sup>d</sup>

## I-2

<sup>1</sup> And certain men came down from Judaea and taught the brethren, Except ye be circumcised after the custom

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 208.

<sup>b</sup> Zeller, ii. 9.

<sup>c</sup> Thiersch, p. 122; Zeller, ii. 13.

<sup>d</sup> J. Thomas, p. 89; McGiffert, p. 170.

of Moses, ye cannot be saved. <sup>2</sup> And when there arose a dissension and no small debate on the part of Paul and Barnabas with them, they arranged that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of their number should go up to the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem about this question.

**2. a dissension.** The teaching of the Judaizers naturally made no little stir in a Church in which a considerable proportion, if not a majority, of the members were uncircumcised Gentiles.<sup>a</sup>

**no small debate.** Paul, fresh from his work among Gentiles, knew, as the Judaizers with their provincial horizon could not know, how fatal such a condition as they sought to impose would be to the spread of Christianity. But their contention may really have strengthened his work by forcing him to think out his principles. If obedience to the Law could not be an essential of Christianity for the Gentile, it could not be an essential even for the Jew. Thus he was driven to define the true condition for admission to the Church, and that was simply faith in Christ.<sup>b</sup> The question, therefore, did not concern the Gentiles only; it was vital to him, a Jew. If their doctrine were sound, he must himself claim to be better than Gentiles in virtue of his circumcision. But all such ground of confidence had been cut from under his feet. He had been shown that he, a Pharisee of Pharisees, was a sinner as truly as any Gentile—that in Christ alone he had any life. And if that was true for him, it was true for all men.<sup>c</sup>

**they arranged.** It is clear that the whole Church at Antioch was with Paul. We read of no dissenting voice. They chose as their representatives the very men who were most deeply committed to the cause of Gentile freedom, and escorted them on their way (ver. 3).<sup>d</sup>

How deeply Paul felt the gravity of the occasion is shown by the fact that he had one of those visions which with him so often marked the travail of great decisions (xvi. 9; xviii. 9; xxii. 18; xxxiii. 11; xxvii. 23).<sup>e</sup> He tells us (Gal. ii. 2) that he went up to Jerusalem 'by revelation'. The statement does not exclude a commission

<sup>a</sup> Row, p. 145.

<sup>b</sup> Stalker, p. 193; Wrede, p. 125.

<sup>c</sup> Maurice, p. 229.

<sup>d</sup> Bungener, p. 81; F. Rendall, *Expositor*, v. vii. 228.

<sup>e</sup> Hausrath, iii. 169.

from the Church at Antioch, as narrated by Luke ; but it shows that it was not their appointment, but his own conviction of the Divine will, which led him to undertake the journey. And going because God had said to him 'Go', he went in the Divine strength, and the greatest men in the Church at Jerusalem only 'seemed to be pillars' (Gal. ii. 9).<sup>a</sup>

He knew that, if the legalists succeeded and circumcision was to be imposed on Gentile Christians, his whole life-work was overthrown (Gal. ii. 2). Whatever his motive in going to the Conference, it certainly was not to make the justification of his work dependent on the judgment of the Twelve. If they had refused to countenance his Gospel, we cannot suppose that he would either have given up preaching or have preached circumcision. But though he did not go to submit the decision to any human tribunal, he felt the grave danger that the unity of the Church might be broken and his work be shipwrecked. So he was anxious to come to an understanding with the Jewish Christians as to what would satisfy them, and how far the Gentiles could go to meet them. It was the policy, not the doctrine, that he went to settle. Nor, probably, had he any serious misgiving as to the view which would be taken by the leaders of the Church at Jerusalem. The Judaizers had not been sent by them (ver. 24). The only man who had been sent by them to Antioch was Barnabas, his own friend and fellow-labourer (xi. 22). And while the result proved that he was not mistaken as to the Apostles, the opposition of the rank and file shows how grave a peril would have arisen if he had not taken this step.<sup>b</sup>

**and certain others.** Titus was one of them (Gal. ii. 3). It is a significant fact that one of the most prominent and trusted of Paul's Gentile helpers, Titus, should never be mentioned by name in the Acts. It is probably due to the same motive which led to the omission of all mention of the rupture between Paul and Peter at Antioch, and to the explanation of Paul's severance from Barnabas by the trivial dispute about Mark. Luke's reticence is no argument against his veracity ; but it shows that he wrote, as he had a perfect right to do, with a definite aim in view. He not only does not record many things, but he purposely avoids recording them.<sup>c</sup> Thus, while the Epistles to the Thessalonians show that the Church there

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 194 ; Parker, ii. 90.

<sup>b</sup> Pfleiderer, *Prim. Christianity*, p. 115 ; Ropes, p. 88 ; Reuss, i. 266 ; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 168 ; Bungener, p. 82 ; P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.* p. 919.

<sup>c</sup> Bacon, p. 119 seq.

consisted mainly of converts from heathenism, the Acts (xvii. 1 seq.) speaks of little but Paul's preaching in the synagogue and of the hostility of the Jews. Of the fruitful eighteen months at Corinth little is told beyond the attempt of the Jews to involve Paul with the Roman authority. Little reference is made to the attacks of the Judaizers upon his work after the Conference, though they fill a large space in Paul's letters. And Luke says practically nothing of the Gentile gift to the Church at Jerusalem, or of the way in which it was received. Clearly he was anxious not to dwell upon any marks of internal discord in the Church.

**the Apostles and elders.** On the previous occasion, when Peter's action at Caesarea had been called in question at Jerusalem, we hear of 'the Apostles and brethren' (xi. 1). But there appears to be insufficient ground for assuming <sup>a</sup> that elders had been appointed in the interval.

### 3-5

<sup>3</sup> They therefore, being brought on their way by the Church, passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. <sup>4</sup> And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received by the Church and the Apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done working with them. <sup>5</sup> But there rose up certain believers, who were of the sect of the Pharisees, saying, It is necessary to circumcise them and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.

**3. great joy.** It is evident that the unfavourable view of Paul's teaching was mainly confined to Judaea. Communities less bound by traditions of the Law welcomed the news of his success among the Gentiles.<sup>b</sup> The cities that had felt 'much joy' (viii. 8) at their own conversion now rejoiced over the conversion of others.

**4. received.** The public conference (ver. 6) was preceded by a general meeting at which the delegates were welcomed. It was also, as we learn from Galatians (ii. 2), preceded by private interviews,

<sup>a</sup> Fraser, p. 132.

<sup>b</sup> L. Merivale, p. 166; Johnston, p. 94.



in which the leading Apostles pledged themselves to a friendly partition of labour.<sup>a</sup>

**the Apostles.** This was, so far as we know, the only occasion on which St. Paul met St. John (Gal. ii. 9).

**reported.** Luke's silence is significant. The joy of the brethren in Phoenicia and Samaria found no echo in Jerusalem.

**5. of the sect of the Pharisees.** In many respects Christianity still appeared to be a spiritual revival of Judaism rather than a new faith; and as such it appealed to the more earnest Jews. But the attachment to forms, which had made them Pharisees before conversion, made them legalists after. Some men of this type at once raised the question which had been agitated at Antioch; but here, on their own ground at Jerusalem, they enlarged their demands. There must be not only circumcision, but complete conformity to the Mosaic Law. And the controversy assumed a personal form, in consequence of the presence of the young Gentile convert, Titus. They demanded that he should be circumcised (Gal. ii. 5). But, in the providence of God, 'a Pharisee of Pharisees' was there to answer them. In Paul, 'of the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised the eighth day,' they met their match. To him Titus was the representative of all Gentile converts, and he refused absolutely<sup>b</sup>.

#### 6-11

<sup>6</sup> And the Apostles and the elders assembled together to consider this matter. <sup>7</sup> And when there had been much debate, Peter rose and said to them, Brethren, ye know how in early days among you God made choice that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe. <sup>8</sup> And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did to us, <sup>9</sup> and made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by their faith. <sup>10</sup> Now therefore why make ye trial of God, that ye put upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? <sup>11</sup> But it is through the grace of the Lord Jesus that we trust to be saved, in like manner as they.

<sup>a</sup> Norris, p. 73.

<sup>b</sup> Purves, p. 99; Maclaren, ii. 83; Parker, ii. 78.

**6. assembled together.** The word 'Council' is best avoided in reference to this assembly at Jerusalem, since it connotes a wholly different order of ideas. The gathering was not an ecclesiastical council with power to legislate, but a friendly conference between a younger and an older Church. The former asked for counsel on a practical question, without conceding to the latter any authority beyond such as belonged to the wisdom and experience of its individual members.<sup>a</sup>

Paul tells us (Gal. ii. 9) that James and Peter and John privately recognized his Divine mission to the Gentiles and entered into a covenant of fellowship with him. The one condition which they laid upon him neither hindered his work nor touched his principles.<sup>b</sup> That there had been a preliminary interview is borne out by the evidence in Luke's narrative of previous arrangement. Peter speaks first; the missionaries tell their story; James sums up. At the same time, Luke's account appears to be compiled from various sources and is not quite consistent. We are told (ver. 6) that the gathering was of 'the Apostles and the Elders'. Yet 'all the multitude' (ver. 12) were present, and were responsible for the decision (ver. 22), though immediately after (ver. 23) it is attributed to the Apostles and Elders.<sup>c</sup>

**7. much debate.** The leaders had already come to an agreement as to the course which they intended to recommend, but they wisely allowed free discussion.

**Peter rose and said.** He claims no precedence, makes no assumption of superiority; just as at a later time (1 Pet. i. 1; v. 1) he describes himself as 'an Apostle of Christ', 'who am also an Elder.'<sup>d</sup>

**God made choice.** God made choice, God bare them witness, God gave them the Holy Spirit, God made no distinction. His argument is that anything said in God's word must be interpreted in the light of God's acts. The matter at issue had been settled by God Himself.<sup>e</sup>

**9. made no distinction.** How then could they dare to make it for Him?<sup>f</sup>

**10. make trial of God.** That is, by distrusting His clear guidance.

**a yoke.** We can scarcely doubt that we have here an echo of the previous interview with Paul. Peter has caught the spirit of him who

<sup>a</sup> Farrar, i. 431; Gilbert, p. 96.

<sup>c</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.* p. 920.

<sup>e</sup> Stiffler, p. 136.

<sup>b</sup> Weizsäcker, i. 180.

<sup>d</sup> Fraser, p. 136.

<sup>f</sup> Renan, *Paul*, p. 84.

calls the ceremonial law 'a yoke of slavery' (Gal. v. 1). He may also have remembered how Jesus had spoken of the precepts of the Law as 'burdens grievous to be borne' (Matt. xxiii. 4), and of the 'easy yoke and light burden' of Christianity (Matt. xi. 30).

With this speech Peter disappears from the Acts. We hear of him later as being rebuked by Paul at Antioch (Gal. ii. 10); we learn from an incidental remark by Paul (1 Cor. ix. 5) that he made missionary journeys, taking his wife with him; and we have at least one letter by him. Otherwise we know only that he went one day to Rome, and there shared with Paul a martyr's death.<sup>a</sup>

## 12-21

<sup>12</sup> And all the multitude kept silence and listened to Barnabas and Paul recounting how great signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through them. <sup>13</sup> And when they had finished speaking, James answered, saying, Brethren, hearken to me. <sup>14</sup> Symeon hath recounted how in the first instance God did look graciously upon the Gentiles to take out of them a people to be called by his name. <sup>15</sup> And with him agree the words of the prophets, as it is written :—

<sup>16</sup> After these things I will once more build again  
the tent of David which is fallen ;  
yea, the ruins thereof I will build again, and will  
set it up ;

<sup>17</sup> That the residue of men may seek after the Lord,  
And all the Gentiles who are called by my name,  
saith the Lord who doeth these things,

<sup>18</sup> known unto him from the beginning of the world.

<sup>19</sup> Wherefore my judgment is that we do not further trouble them which from among the Gentiles are turning to God ; <sup>20</sup> but that we write to them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, [and from what is strangled,] and from blood. <sup>21</sup> For

<sup>a</sup> Schaff, ii. 10; Parker, ii. 284.

Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.

**12. kept silence.** The words imply previous noise and interruption. It must be remembered that the question was one which excited intense feeling.<sup>a</sup>

**Barnabas and Paul.** This reversion to the old order of the names is a proof of the genuineness of the narrative. No forger would have thought of such a subtlety. In Jerusalem Barnabas was well known and highly honoured; whereas Paul would be remembered as once a persecutor of the Church. And since a simple narrative of facts was all that was necessary, Paul no doubt allowed Barnabas to take the more prominent part.<sup>b</sup>

**recounting.** They followed on the lines already adopted by Peter—that facts were stronger than theories. They did not argue, but simply narrated what God had wrought among the Gentiles under their ministry.<sup>c</sup> And this is borne out by Gal. ii. 7-9, where Paul is said to have defended his cause by an appeal to the actual success of his work.

**signs and wonders.** They appeal, not so much to the fact that Gentiles had become Christians without having first become Jews—that argument might have been met by the retort, 'But they are not true Christians'—as to the miracles which were God's seal upon their work.<sup>d</sup> No arguments could have brought home so forcibly to the Church at Jerusalem the responsibility of reversing this work as the proof that it manifestly had the Divine approval. So years before, Peter had asked in the case of Cornelius, 'Who was I that I could withstand God?' (xi. 17).<sup>e</sup>

**13. James.** He may have been elected to the Apostleship as Matthias had been. The latter's appointment shows the belief that the number should be kept at twelve; and James may have taken the place of his martyred namesake, the son of Zebedee. Paul classes him with the Twelve (Gal. i. 19). But his relationship to Jesus may have been the cause of the position assigned to him, though it would be a wholly inadequate cause and contrary to the tenour of what Jesus said (Matt. xii. 50) as to who were His brothers. Or his authoritative position may have been due to his character as a strict

<sup>a</sup> Fraser, p. 134.

<sup>b</sup> Binney, p. 185; Stifler, p. 136; Baumgarten, ii. 39.

<sup>c</sup> Fraser, p. 139; Maclaren, ii. 82; Pfleiderer, *Paulinism*, ii. 240.

<sup>d</sup> Bunell, p. 209.

<sup>e</sup> Iverach, p. 64.

Jew and to his reputation for excessive reverence for the Law, which in the Church at Jerusalem would greatly increase his influence.<sup>a</sup>

His speech bears some marks of authenticity. An interesting indication is the use of the strictly Jewish name, Symeon—the old name by which James had known him in youth—though now all men probably called him Peter.<sup>b</sup> At the same time, since the discussion must almost certainly have been conducted in Aramaic, Luke would have to put the record into its Greek dress. And if James quoted Amos, it would probably be from the Hebrew text; and this says only that Israel should again have dominion over Edom and over the other nations which had once been under their rule; and so would have no real relevance to the question at issue. Luke, on the other hand, giving the quotation from the LXX version, freely alters both the words and the application. Even so, the relevance is not clear, unless we press the *argumentum ab silentio*; that is, that the prophet, in declaring that the Gentiles may become God's people, says nothing about ritual conditions.<sup>c</sup>

17. **of men.** Our Hebrew text has Edôm. The LXX translators evidently had before them a text which read Adâm ('man').

**who are called by my name.** The same phrase is found in James ii. 7.

18. **known unto him.** These words are not in Amos, but are an addition by James. In calling the Gentiles, God was carrying out what had been His purpose from the beginning.

19. **my judgment.** This was not so liberal as that of Peter, who had urged no restrictions; but it was more likely, while it conceded the main issue, to be accepted by the Conference.

20. **we write to them.** The word appears to be carefully chosen. It may mean either 'write to' or 'enjoin upon', and the ambiguity is probably studied. It was necessary to avoid the appearance of dictation—to use no language which might seem to affront the spiritual freedom of the Christians of Antioch.<sup>d</sup>

**that they abstain.** Commentators have raised many difficulties with regard to these prohibitions. They regard them as (i) ceremonial—forbidding certain kinds of food; (ii) moral—forbidding fornication. Harnack has, however, shown conclusively<sup>e</sup> that three things are forbidden, all of them moral—idolatry, fornication, and murder.

(i) 'pollutions of idols' (ver. 20) and 'things sacrificed to idols' (ver. 29) refer, not to sacrificial meat sold in the market, but to idola-

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, pp. 198, 551; Adeney, p. 256.

<sup>b</sup> Maclaren, ii. 85.

<sup>c</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.* p. 921; Maclaren, ii. 86.

<sup>d</sup> A. F. W. Blunt, p. 27.

<sup>e</sup> *Acts*, p. 250 seq.



trous practices. Hence we see why Paul did not, in answering the question of the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. x. 27 seq.), refer to the decision of this Conference.

(ii) 'fornication.' The supposed combination of the prohibition of this grave moral offence with the purely ceremonial prohibition of certain kinds of food has puzzled commentators, but the combination of three moral offences—idolatry, fornication, and murder—presents no difficulty. Cf. Rev. xxii. 15, 'Without are . . . the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters.' It must be remembered that fornication was scarcely regarded as wrong by the Gentile world. Even Socrates speaks of it without censure.<sup>a</sup> Among the heathen the practice of immorality was an essential part of the worship of many of their deities. And just as the Jew took into his Christianity some of his old habits and prejudices, so the Gentile was in danger of carrying into his some of the vices of heathenism. Of this we have proof in more than one of Paul's letters (e. g. Gal. v. 16 seq.).<sup>b</sup>

(iii) 'blood' means bloodshed, or murder. The words 'and from what is strangled' are an early gloss written in the margin by some one who misunderstood the 'blood' and thought that certain kinds of food were forbidden. The proof of this is that many of the Fathers not only quote the verse without them, but interpolate the words, 'not to do to others what thou wouldst not wish done to thyself', showing that they regarded the prohibition as relating to moral, and not ceremonial, matters. This is also borne out by the fact that the Greek word rendered 'keep themselves from', in xxi. 25, where these prohibitions are referred to, is never used in the New Testament of abstinence from meats, but is used (Luke xii. 15) of abstinence from a moral offence. Further, the prohibition of certain kinds of food would be inconsistent with ver. 19, for it would certainly 'trouble them which from among the Gentiles are turning to God'. If the necessity of forbidding murder seems strange, it must be remembered that at a time when exposure of infants and murder of slaves were common, converts needed to be taught elementary morality. So St. Peter exhorts (1 Pet. iv. 15), 'Let none of you suffer as a murderer.'

21. **For Moses.** The argument is that there was no fear of the Law falling into disuse because Gentile Christians were exempted from its observance. The maintenance of the Law did not depend on what Gentiles did or left undone, but on the universal diffusion of Jews in all the cities.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Xen. *Mem.* iii. 13.

<sup>b</sup> Binney, p. 198.

<sup>c</sup> Baumgarten, ii. 55.

<sup>22</sup> Then the Apostles and the Elders with the whole Church resolved to choose out men of their company and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas called Barsabbas and Silas, leading men among the brethren. <sup>23</sup> And they wrote by them, The Apostles and Elders, brethren to their brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting. <sup>24</sup> Inasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you, unsettling your souls with words which we did not enjoin, <sup>25</sup> we have resolved, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, <sup>26</sup> who have devoted their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>27</sup> We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves also shall report to you the same things by word of mouth. <sup>28</sup> For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;—<sup>29</sup> that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood [and from things strangled] and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well.

**22. resolved.** If all did not approve, at least no objection was raised. But after-events show that the Judaizers were silenced rather than convinced.<sup>a</sup>

**to choose out men.** Wisdom was shown in the choice of delegates. One, Judas, was a Hebrew, perhaps a brother of the Joseph Barsabbas of i. 23; the other, Silas, apparently a Roman citizen (xvi. 37) and so almost certainly a Hellenist; and both prophets (ver. 32); men, that is, with special gifts of teaching and exhortation.<sup>b</sup>

**23. they wrote.** This letter, if genuine, is the earliest Christian document known to us.<sup>c</sup> And since numerous copies were made

<sup>a</sup> Binney, p. 186; Fraser, p. 144.

<sup>b</sup> Rackham, *Acts*; Bungener, p. 95.

<sup>c</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 219.

(xvi. 4), Luke may easily have come into possession of one. Har-nack decides <sup>a</sup> against its genuineness on the ground that it is Lukan in both style and vocabulary. But Chase gives <sup>b</sup> strong reasons for the opposite view. It is a commendatory letter, such as were constantly sent by the Sanhedrin (e. g. ix. 2) to the synagogues of the Dispersion, commending Judas and Silas. It will be observed that no mention is made of the matter in dispute (the latter part of ver. 24 in the Authorized Version is 'not genuine'), and the word 'circumcision' does not occur. All details are left to be given orally by the delegates. This would be inconceivable in a fictitious letter composed later. Nor would a Pauline forger have placed Paul's name second to that of Barnabas.

**The Apostles and Elders.** There are two readings in the MSS. : (i) 'The Apostles and Elders and brethren' (Authorized Version); (ii) 'The Apostles and the elder brethren' (Revised Version). The latter has the better authority, but is not necessarily right on that account, since the second 'and' may have been omitted for hierarchical reasons. The reading would very early be of importance as bearing on the question of the admissibility of laymen to ecclesiastical councils; those who upheld their claim quoting this passage with, and those who opposed it without, the conjunction.<sup>c</sup> But if the second reading be adopted, it should be translated, not as in R. V., 'the elder brethren', which is an expression nowhere else found, but 'brethren to their brethren'—a formula found in the commendatory letter in 2 Macc. i. 1.<sup>d</sup> Thus the passage implies the absence at this time of any distinction in kind between elders and the rest of the brethren.

**25. our beloved.** The word is confirmed by Paul's statement (Gal. ii. 9) that the Apostles 'gave the right hand of fellowship' to himself and Barnabas.

**28. to the Holy Spirit.** Even in this book of the Gospel of the Holy Spirit these words are startling. No such language occurs elsewhere in the New Testament. Hence their primary reference is probably to the witness of the Spirit (ver. 8) to the right of the Gentiles to be admitted to the Church. The action of the Spirit had already furnished ground for a judgment. But we need not therefore exclude the other interpretation of the words, which would regard them as a simple expression of trust in the Lord's promise that His Spirit

<sup>a</sup> *Acts*, p. 223.

<sup>b</sup> *Credibility of the Acts*, p. 94 seq.

<sup>c</sup> Conybeare and Howson, i. 210; Farrar, i. 249; Stokes, ii. 236.

<sup>d</sup> Page, *Acts*; Chase, p. 94 seq.

would guide His followers into truth (John xvi. 13). The calm and brotherly manner in which they had been able to conduct their deliberations testified to His presence.<sup>a</sup>

**and to us.** The addition of these words shows that the Spirit did not force Himself upon the Church by an irresistible revelation. The faithful deliberated, and listened to clashing opinions. If the controversy had been settled by direct revelation, the precedent would not have helped the Church in after-days, when Apostles and miraculous gifts had passed away. But if the decision was reached by Christian men in the exercise of their natural powers, and in prayerful reliance on the Divine guidance, we have a helpful example to follow in all times of controversy.<sup>b</sup>

**necessary.** Not in the sense of essential to salvation, but necessary if there was to be fellowship between Gentile and Jewish Christians.

As has been said above, this is not the 'decree', but a 'commendatory letter'. But we can gather plainly what the decision was. Liberty was to be conceded to all purely Gentile churches, while the Law was to be observed in all Jewish churches. This, however, could not be any real or lasting solution of the problem. It was neither logical nor practical: not logical, for if a Gentile Christian need not observe the Law, observance of the Law was not essential to Christianity and could not be necessary for a Jewish Christian: not practical, for a Jew who observed the Law could not eat with a Gentile, and the greatest act of Christian worship was a common meal. So long as the Gentile and the Jewish mission-fields could be kept apart, the compromise might work; but wherever they overlapped—that is, in all mixed congregations—it was bound to break down.<sup>c</sup>

How far it was from being a real solution was quickly shown by the dispute between Peter and Paul at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11 seq.), which undid whatever this conference had achieved. That dispute had its origin in the arrival of fresh Judaizers at Antioch. The Pharisaic party had been defeated at Jerusalem, but the cause was to them too sacred to be abandoned without a further struggle. From this time forward we can trace their efforts in almost every place where Paul worked. Not content with insisting on circumcision, they denied his Apostleship, traduced his character, misrepresented his refusal to accept maintenance, dwelt with cruel malice on his personal defects,

<sup>a</sup> Page, *Acts*; Maclaren, ii. 90; Pressensé, p. 108.

<sup>b</sup> Bungener, p. 96; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 174.

<sup>c</sup> Pfeiderer, *Paulinism*, ii. 10; Weizsäcker, i. 187; Wernle, i. 155; Weinle, p. 226.

and in some cases succeeded in alienating the love and loyalty of his converts.<sup>a</sup>

## 30-35

<sup>30</sup> So they, being dismissed, went down to Antioch; and, having gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. <sup>31</sup> And they, when they had read it, rejoiced for the consolation. <sup>32</sup> And Judas and Silas, being themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words and strengthened them. <sup>33</sup> And after they had spent some time there, they were dismissed in peace from the brethren to those that had sent them. <sup>35</sup> But Paul and Barnabas tarried in Antioch, teaching and preaching the glad tidings of the word of the Lord, with many others also.

[34. 'Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still' (Authorized Version). This verse, which is wanting in the best MSS., is a later insertion to account for the presence of Silas at Antioch in ver. 40. And it suggests a wrong view. He may have arranged at Antioch to join Paul, but he would naturally return first to Jerusalem to report on the discharge of his mission.<sup>b</sup> The 'after some days' of ver. 36 allows for a sufficient interval in which he may have returned to Antioch.]

35. **tarried in Antioch.** McGiffert holds<sup>c</sup> that Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians at this time. (i) In Gal. iv. 3 he refers to two visits. If the South Galatian theory is correct, the second visit had been already paid (xiv. 21), and the letter must have been written before the visit of xvi. 1, which is the third. (ii) The words 'so quickly' (Gal. i. 16) imply that little time had intervened between their conversion and the relapse which occasioned the writing of the letter. (iii) If he had visited them between the conference and the writing of the letter, it is hard to see why he should have written so full an account of that conference, about which he must have told them by word of mouth. (iv) The letter contains no personal greeting from companions; whereas later on Timothy, a Galatian, was with him.

<sup>a</sup> Wrede, p. 69; Stanley, p. 197; F. B. Meyer, p. 102.

<sup>b</sup> Rendall, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> p. 226 seq.



If this reasoning is sound, 'Galatians' will be the earliest extant letter of Paul's—two years earlier than those to the Thessalonians.

**with many others.** Among the number may possibly have been the martyr-bishop Ignatius, who was at this time a young man.<sup>a</sup>

**PAUL'S REBUKE OF PETER AT ANTIOCH.** There are three points in Luke's history at which the episode narrated in Gal. ii. 11 may be inserted:—

(i) Ramsay<sup>b</sup> would insert it at xiv. 28, and he is able to urge plausible arguments in favour of so doing; e.g. that the same difficulty was not likely to arise twice (before, and after, the conference), and under similar circumstances ('men came down from Judaea', xv. 1; and 'certain came from James', Gal. ii. 12)—that Barnabas might be 'carried away' by the Judaizers before the conference, and being convinced by Paul of his error consent to go as one of the delegates to the conference; but could scarcely have been 'carried away' after it—that Peter could scarcely have 'drawn back' (Gal. ii. 12) after his uncompromising speech at the conference—and that Paul, if his rebuke were subsequent to the conference, could scarcely have failed to appeal to the recent decree.

(ii) Others would insert it at xviii. 23. They argue that the renewed activity of the Judaizers would be explained by the large accession of Gentile converts as the result of Paul's second missionary journey; and that Peter's tergiversation is less startling when some time had elapsed since the conference.

(iii) But these considerations cannot outweigh the reasons for inserting it at xv. 35. Since Paul himself in Gal. ii. 11 plainly places the rebuke after the visit to Jerusalem narrated in the preceding cases, those who identify that visit with the visit to the conference are precluded from accepting Ramsay's conclusion. And since Paul mentions the presence of Barnabas, who left Antioch before his second journey, the episode of the rebuke cannot be postponed till xviii. 23.<sup>c</sup>

What happened appears to be as follows. Soon after the conference Peter visited Antioch, and found all the members of the Church living in full freedom and joining without scruple in the Lord's Supper. And he did as the others. The obligations of the Law would sit more lightly upon the Galilean fisherman than upon a Jew of Jerusalem, even if Peter had not often in the company of Jesus eaten with unwashed hands in the houses of publicans and sinners.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> *Paul the Traveller*, p. 159 seq.

<sup>c</sup> Purves, p. 154.

<sup>d</sup> Bacon, p. 129.

And he may have felt a generous wish to show the Apostle to the Gentiles in what complete accord with him he, the Apostle to the Circumcision, was as regarded the principle involved in the recent controversy. But presently messengers came from Jerusalem to check this disregard of the Law. James' action in dispatching them implied no repudiation of the compact which he had himself proposed at the conference. Rigid Jew that he was, he had never contemplated Jew and Gentile associating on an equality and eating together. The question before the conference had been the standing of Gentile Christians—whether or not they were to be subject to the Law. The question which was now at issue was the conduct of Jewish Christians—whether they were, in their intercourse with their Gentile brethren, to be free from its obligation—and this had not been before the conference at all. And the Judaizers were quick to seize their opportunity. Abandoning their former contention that circumcision was necessary to salvation, they now opposed the union of Jew and Gentile in the mixed congregation at Antioch ; and by asserting the higher status of the circumcised placed a moral pressure on the uncircumcised to surrender their freedom.<sup>a</sup>

Under these circumstances Peter's courage was not equal to his generosity, and he withdrew from social intercourse with the Gentile Christians. It was the old Peter, with the impulsive readiness to promise more than he could perform. Yet his conduct need not have been due, as Paul says (Gal. ii. 12), to 'fear' of the Judaizers. He was the Apostle to the Circumcision ; and the messengers from James may have convinced him that his influence with his own countrymen would be impaired and his authority weakened, if he showed himself careless about the observance of the Law. Nor does Paul's use of the word 'dissimulation' (Gal. ii. 13) imply conscious disloyalty to conviction on Peter's part, but rather intellectual inability to see that by his action in withdrawing from intercourse with Gentiles he was false to his own principles—was by his conduct obscuring the true Gospel, which he believed as fully as Paul, that man was saved by faith in Christ alone. He had no clear vision of a guiding principle ; and uncertainty in thinking led to uncertainty in conduct.<sup>b</sup> None the less he should have seen that the obvious inference would be drawn from his action, that he regarded the Gentile Christians as an inferior caste in the Church ; and that no less a question was at

<sup>a</sup> Weinel, p. 227 ; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 187 ; Cone, p. 85 ; Lechler, i. 177, 234 ; Iverach, p. 68 ; G. G. Findlay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Paul.

<sup>b</sup> McGiffert, p. 206 ; Pfeleiderer, *Paulinism*, ii. 14.

stake than that of liberty or bondage for the Christian Church in all future ages. Happily a greater man than Peter was at Antioch—one capable of seeing great principles through the haze of temporary and local circumstances. And Paul did not hesitate, though he was placed in a peculiarly trying position. For one who had been a persecutor of the Church to rebuke one of the Twelve who had lived in daily intercourse with Jesus was a hard task. But his moral courage stood the test. He would neither sanction by his silence what he felt to be wrong, nor be satisfied with a private remonstrance. The error had been publicly committed, and the rebuke must be as public. 'I said unto Peter before them all' (Gal. ii. 14).<sup>a</sup>

Nor did Peter's defection stand alone. It was bad enough that he should draw back; it was yet worse that he carried with him many of Paul's Jewish converts and 'even Barnabas' (Gal. ii. 13). There is a world of pathos in that 'even'! The man who had first sanctioned the admission of Gentiles to the Church at Antioch, who had been his fellow-worker among Gentiles in Galatia, who had championed the cause of the Gentiles at the conference—that he should be caught in the current of reaction, this was disastrous; the results of years of arduous work were being imperilled by this narrow Judaism.<sup>b</sup> And, indeed, Barnabas' weakness is surprising. His former close relations with Peter—they had probably shared the same house at Jerusalem (see on ix. 27)—may have made it specially difficult for him to dissociate himself publicly from his action. But, all the same, his conduct is only explicable on the supposition that in his previous work among the Gentiles he had never really thought out the principles involved, so as to be able to vindicate his action when challenged. He was a good, but not a great, man; self-denying and lovable, but not of the stern stuff needed in a crisis.<sup>c</sup>

And Mark, who was devotedly attached to Peter, and appears to have been now at Antioch (ver. 37), may not only have been among 'the other Jews' (Gal. ii. 13) who followed Peter's example, but may have influenced his kinsman Barnabas. This would explain Paul's strong objection to take him with them (ver. 38). His loyalty to the Gospel, as Paul understood it, was doubtful, and his influence with Barnabas was harmful.<sup>d</sup>

It is clear that Peter did not admit his error, and again associate

<sup>a</sup> Row, p. 144; Farrar, i. 442; Spence, p. 237.

<sup>b</sup> Adeney, p. 320; Balmforth, p. 140.

<sup>c</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 485; Iverach, p. 41.

<sup>d</sup> F. H. Chase, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Mark.

with the Gentiles, since Paul could not have failed to mention such a fact in his letter to the Galatians. One result of the rupture was that the Judaizers were more exasperated than ever. Before, they had attacked Paul's principles : henceforth they attacked his person and his work, organizing a counter-mission in his own communities. Another result probably was that Paul, realizing that the time was not yet ripe for obliterating the boundary between Jew and Gentile, resolved to carry on his labours in more distant parts, where he would be comparatively free from Judaizing opposition.<sup>a</sup>

## 36-41

<sup>36</sup> And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, Let us go again and visit the brethren in every city wherein we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they fare. <sup>37</sup> And Barnabas wished to take with them John also, who was called Mark. <sup>38</sup> But Paul thought not good to take with them him who deserted them in Pamphylia and went not with them to the work. <sup>39</sup> And there ensued a sharp contention, so that they parted asunder one from the other ; and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus ; <sup>40</sup> but Paul chose Silas and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. <sup>41</sup> And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

36. **Let us go.** No sooner was all smooth in the Church at Antioch than Paul was bitten with the old missionary hunger. There is, however, no evidence that he thought at first of new fields of labour. It was the longing to see his old converts which was drawing him. But where he proposed God disposed, and larger designs opened up before him as he went forward.<sup>b</sup>

Throughout his letters can be traced his sense of the precariousness of the Christian life of new converts. He has scarcely left a place before his anxiety to hear tidings of the stability of his disciples becomes almost unbearable. He tells the Thessalonians that he

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 208 ; P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 918 ; Weizsäcker, i. 197, 227 ; Lechler, i. 179 ; Wrede, p. 69.

<sup>b</sup> Parker, ii. 117 ; Gilbert, p. 107 ; Stalker, p. 119.

cherished them 'even as a nurse cherisheth her children' (1 Thess. ii. 7). It is one of the fine features of his character. The zeal which bore him over sea and land to win converts is less rare than the loving anxiety with which he carried them, when won, in his thoughts and prayers.<sup>a</sup>

**37. to take with them John.** Mark may either have accompanied his cousin Barnabas from Jerusalem after the conference, or have come subsequently to Antioch with Peter. His prejudice against work among Gentiles may have been removed by the decision of the conference, or the remonstrance of Barnabas may have brought him to a sense of his previous misconduct. At any rate, since he himself now wished to rejoin them, it is clear that he was prepared to promise greater perseverance.

**38. Paul thought not good.** Probably the proposal took him by surprise. If, as is likely, Mark had originally been taken as their assistant on the recommendation of Barnabas, that fact might make Paul resent the suggestion of Barnabas to take him again.

**deserted.** The Greek word is a strong one—'apostatized from the work.' Hippolytus calls Mark 'the man with the finger wanting', in allusion to the Roman custom of marking a deserter by cutting off the little finger.<sup>b</sup>

**39. a sharp contention.** It is the old story. The smaller rubs of life often try the temper more than the greater things, and they find us with our armour off. Who would have expected 'the son of consolation' to be violent in a dispute? Who would have expected Paul, the most generous of men, to forget his debt to the old friend who had trusted him when others suspected (ix. 27), had gone to Tarsus to fetch him to share his labours at Antioch (xi. 25); and had later loyally accepted his leadership (xiii. 13)? But the real difference probably lay deeper than the disagreement about Mark's fitness or unfitness for the work. If, as is almost certain, he had followed Barnabas in being carried away by Peter's example, this would be a fresh ground for distrust in Paul's eyes. And when Barnabas insisted on taking him, Paul would remember that Barnabas himself had recently shown that they were not in principle agreed about the relation between Jewish and Gentile Christians; and he may have felt that their future association in missionary work among the heathen was undesirable. And it may even be <sup>c</sup> that Barnabas, after finding himself once more in the old place of high consideration

<sup>a</sup> Benson, p. 361; Vaughan, ii. p. 247.

<sup>b</sup> Benson, p. 362.

Binney, p. 192.



at Jerusalem was beginning to feel his secondary position at Antioch, and resented Paul's determination to have his own way.

**they parted.** So God overruled the issue. The water of life flowed in a double, instead of a single, channel; and Paul could say even of this miserable business, 'The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel' (Phil. i. 12).

**to Cyprus.** This is the last mention of Barnabas in the Acts. That his teaching was successful is 'shown by the fact that an Alexandrian Jew about the end of the first century, when publishing a commentary on texts of Scripture, attributed it, in order to lend authority to his work, to Barnabas.<sup>a</sup>

40. **chose Silas.** Harnack thinks <sup>b</sup> that Silas was Luke's authority for the records concerning Jerusalem and Antioch. From the fact that he was one of the delegates to carry the letter we may infer that he had shown a liberal spirit in the deliberations at the conference; and he had probably sided with Paul in the dispute with Peter. Thus his conduct would contrast with that of Barnabas. His Roman citizenship shows a connexion with the Gentile world, to which he would therefore be an acceptable evangelist. As he is not mentioned in the Acts after Paul's first visit to Corinth, nor in any of the salutations in Paul's letters written after that visit, he probably died at that time. He may, however, be the same as the Silvanus who was the bearer of Peter's first Epistle (ver. 12), in which case he may have left Paul at Corinth and joined Peter.

**being commended.** The statement does not necessarily imply that Barnabas had not also the sanction of the Church, since Luke's narrative is concerned with Paul and not with Barnabas. But the natural inference is that the Church at Antioch agreed with Paul.<sup>c</sup>

41. **Syria and Cilicia.** These Churches had probably been founded by Paul during his stay at Tarsus (ix. 30).

THE QUARREL BETWEEN PAUL AND BARNABAS. The question has been asked, Which of the two was in the right? And the answer is that both acted from good motives. Barnabas felt that it was hard that one still young should be debarred from useful work, which he earnestly desired to share, on account of a past fault which he now heartily repented. Himself a man of kindly, generous disposition, ready to see the good in men and to trust where others doubted, he could not bear to think of the effect which a rebuff might have on a beginner. But this very 'goodness' was liable to degenerate into

<sup>a</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, p. 83.

<sup>b</sup> *Acts*, p. 201.

<sup>c</sup> Lewin, i. 165.

its weak counterfeit, 'good nature'—the temper which leads men to tolerate indifferent instruments, and to show partiality to relatives where posts of responsibility are concerned.<sup>a</sup>

Paul, on the other hand, putting the interests of the work, not of the person, in the first place, felt that he could not trust a staff which had once broken in his hand. Nor did he care to risk having his own liberal views thwarted by a timorous companion, still under the bondage of Jewish prejudices. But he, like Barnabas, had perhaps the defects of his good qualities. His own ardent zeal may have made him too little tolerant of faintheartedness in others.<sup>b</sup>

If we are not called to decide who was right, who wrong, we may at least be sure that both felt sadly the truth of what they had told the Lystraeans, 'We are men of like nature with you' (xiv. 15). And it is well for us to have the encouragement of knowing that these men, good and great though they were, were not perfect, were no more perfect than the Peter who denied his Lord, or the John who wished to call down fire on the Samaritans. There is only one infallible Person in the Church, and He is its Lord. Paul could ask, 'Who is Paul?' and answer, 'A minister, a servant, a slave of Christ.' Jesus only could look up and ask, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?'<sup>c</sup>

Both, at all events, suffered. They had probably known one another in boyhood as fellow-students at Tarsus. Certainly they had worked together for years; had faced together dangers by sea and land, together proclaimed Christ in strange cities, together fought the battle for the freedom of the Gospel. And now they were parting in anger—Paul from the man to whom he owed more than to any other human being; Barnabas from the greatest spirit of the age.<sup>d</sup> Whether they ever met again we do not know; but some years later Paul alludes to Barnabas (1 Cor. ix. 6) in a way which shows that no feeling of estrangement remained; and the description of Mark as 'kinsman of Barnabas' (Col. iv. 10) reads like a fond recollection of old times. And the fact that Mark, who now went with Barnabas, later rejoined Paul is evidence that Barnabas had cherished no grudge. Whether he was still living or not, it is likely that Mark in so doing was obeying his expressed wish.<sup>e</sup> And it is pleasant to know that the 'deserter from Pamphylia' lived to hear the sentence on himself revoked by him who had pronounced it (Col. iv. 10, 11; Philemon 24).

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 99; Kitto, p. 319; Stalker, p. 119; Maurice, p. 247; Howson, *Companions*, p. 23. <sup>b</sup> Parker, ii. 117; Pressensé, p. 113; L. Merivale, p. 174.

<sup>c</sup> Macduff, *Paul*, p. 157; Parker, ii. 119.

<sup>d</sup> Stalker, p. 120; Farrar, i. 451; Iverach, p. 70.

<sup>e</sup> Kitto, p. 321.

## CHAPTER XVI

## 1-5

<sup>1</sup> And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra: and behold, a certain disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewess who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. <sup>2</sup> The same was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. <sup>3</sup> Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and he took and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. <sup>4</sup> And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them for their observance the ordinances that had been determined by the Apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> So the churches continued to grow strong in the faith and to increase in numbers daily.

**1. to Derbe.** Instead of travelling northward from Attaleia to Pisidian Antioch and then eastward, as in his previous tour, Paul made his way from Cilicia to Lycaonia from the west, and revisited the cities in reverse order. The reason may possibly have been the hope of finding in Timothy one fitted to take the place which Mark had been deemed unworthy to fill.<sup>a</sup>

The first question to meet him in each city would be, 'But where is Barnabas?'—one of those questions which open heart-wounds; and Paul was too true a man to put off questioners with an equivocating answer. Happily he could say, 'Though we have agreed to go different ways, we are still engaged in the same work.'<sup>b</sup>

**and behold.** The language marks a happy episode in the tour. It seemed providential that, as Silas had joined Paul after the defection of Barnabas, so another should be found to take the place of Mark. It is characteristic of Luke that he usually records no details of second visits; and the motive of the present exception is the importance of the circumcision of Timothy and his enrolment as a member of the missionary party.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 205; Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 151.

<sup>b</sup> Farrar, i. 457; Parker, ii. 125.

<sup>c</sup> J. Moffatt, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 5075; Johnston, p. 100.

**Timothy.** He would be at this time about eighteen years of age. Some twelve years later Paul wrote to him, 'Let no man despise thy youth' (1 Tim. iv. 12). Hence he would have been only twelve at the time of Paul's previous visit. Paul calls him his 'true child in faith' (1 Tim. i. 2) and his 'beloved child' (2 Tim. i. 2);<sup>a</sup> and evidently regarded him with love and confidence beyond any of his companions (cf. 1 Tim. i. 3; v. 23; 2 Tim. iii. 15; Phil. ii. 19 seq.).

**a Jewess.** Eunice (2 Tim. i. 5). Her Greek name points to some previous connexion with Gentiles; and, had there not been such, she would scarcely have contracted one of those mixed marriages which were forbidden to Jews, or allowed her son to be uncircumcised. Thus she must have been a liberal-minded woman, looking beyond the letter and ceremonial of the Law to the deeper truths of revelation, and would have brought up her son in a way with which Paul would sympathize. With her lived her mother, Lois (2 Tim. i. 5), and they had trained the child carefully. He had 'from a babe known the sacred writings' (2 Tim. iii. 15). The Greek father was undoubtedly a proselyte, for the daughter of the devout Lois would not have married a heathen; and though he had objected to his son's circumcision, he had given him a name which, while fairly common among Greeks, would by its religious significance be acceptable to his wife.

3. **Him would Paul have.** Timothy seems to have been 'the only son of his mother, and she was a widow'. But like Hannah (1 Sam. i. 28) she recognized the call to give him to the Lord. In the first instance he was probably taken as an assistant rather than as a preacher. It is clear that he stood on a lower footing than Silas (verse 19; xvii. 4, 10). But after Silas' departure or death, Timothy may have taken his place.<sup>b</sup> With the blood of both Jews and Greeks in his veins, he was specially fitted to work among both peoples. If the Cross was 'unto Jews a stumbling-block and unto Gentiles foolishness', to the Christian Timothy it was 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Cor. i. 23, 24).<sup>c</sup>

**and circumcised him.** In this case Paul took a step which he had strenuously resisted in the case of Titus (Gal. ii. 5). Titus was a pure Gentile, who had become a Christian on the basis of salvation through faith in Christ. To have circumcised him at the demand of the Judaizers would have been a concession of principle. But Timothy was, according to Jewish reckoning, a Jew by birth; and

<sup>a</sup> Benson, p. 362.<sup>b</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 124.<sup>c</sup> Parker, ii. 126.

the fact that his father was a Greek was too generally known not to provoke inquiry as to whether he was circumcised or not. No principle was here at stake, but his circumcision was essential to his efficiency. For Paul to take an uncircumcised Jew as assistant in his missionary labours would have been to raise a storm in every synagogue that he entered. What was not necessary on the ground of salvation was indispensable as a qualification for service.<sup>a</sup>

The circumcision was followed by solemn imposition of hands (1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6).

4. **the ordinances.** It was a happy thing that Silas, the authorized exponent of the decision reached at the conference, was in Paul's company. Otherwise the absence of Barnabas might have roused suspicion.<sup>b</sup>

5. **So the Churches.** One of those summarizing sentences with which Luke marks the close of a chapter in his history (ii. 47; v. 42; ix. 30).<sup>c</sup>

## 6-10

<sup>6</sup> And they went through the Phrygian and Galatian district, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. <sup>7</sup> And when they came over against Mysia, they were essaying to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not; <sup>8</sup> but passing by Mysia they came down to Troas. <sup>9</sup> And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing, beseeching him and saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. <sup>10</sup> And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the glad tidings to them.

6. **the Phrygian and Galatian district.** One district is meant, not two. The country could be described either as Phrygia or Galatia, according as the popular or the political usage was employed.<sup>d</sup>

At this point the advocates of the North Galatian theory place the founding of the Churches of Galatia. But see note on xiii. 14.

<sup>a</sup> L. Merivale, p. 177; Stifler, p. 150.

<sup>b</sup> Conybeare and Howson, i. 233.

<sup>c</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, pp. 199, 210; *Church Review*, July, 1893.



Luke clearly regards the revelations (ver. 6, 7, 9) as meant to show that the plans with which Paul had started were divinely set aside in favour of a mission to Europe. This consideration alone is conclusive against intercalating here a mission to North Galatia.<sup>a</sup>

**in Asia.** Whatever dreams Paul may have had of one day preaching in Europe, it is clear that he had not meant to do so till he had established Christianity in Asia. At Pisidian Antioch his thoughts would naturally turn thither. Only two hundred miles to the west was Ephesus, the chief city of the whole country. But he was made to realize that another Mind than his own was planning his course.<sup>b</sup> How the prohibition was conveyed we are not told, but Silas was a prophet (xv. 32), and the action of the Spirit is elsewhere (xxi. 11) associated with prophecy. It is, however, more helpful to see in such language no pretension to exceptional advantages. The mind of the Spirit was probably made known to Paul, as it is to Christians in all time, through some person or some circumstances; and he, realizing that he was living in communion with Him, acknowledged the Guide whom all men ought to acknowledge. The life which prays 'Lead, kindly light' sees the guiding star.<sup>c</sup>

**7. Bithynia.** They were no doubt attracted by its many flourishing cities, such as Nicea and Nicomedia. Pliny, who was Proconsul in A.D. 110, found numerous Christians there. The Churches in Bithynia may have been founded later by Peter, whose first Epistle is addressed in part to them.<sup>d</sup>

**suffered them not.** Again they encountered obstacles hemming them in, on this side and on that, in unaccountable ways; and again Luke, in recording what another might call 'the accidents of travel', sees the guiding hand of a personal Lord.<sup>e</sup>

**8. passing by.** Not literally, for they would have to pass through Mysia on their way to Troas; but in the figurative sense of 'neglecting'. They did not preach there, since it was a part of the 'Asia' in which they had been forbidden to 'speak the word'.<sup>f</sup> Paul, no doubt, now thought that Troas was the field where he was being called to labour. It was a busy city and, as the subsequent history shows (xx. 7), offered a good opening for missionary work.

**9. a vision.** The revelation of the Divine purpose is no longer

<sup>a</sup> Rendall, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> McGiffert, p. 236; Gilbert, p. 110; Purves, p. 180.

<sup>c</sup> Rackham, *Acts*; Parker, ii. 132.

<sup>d</sup> Stokes, ii. 266; Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>e</sup> McGiffert, p. 236; Norris, p. 81.

<sup>f</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 196.

negative. Visions, with Paul, usually mark a crisis. He was about to take a most important step—a step never dreamed of when he started from Antioch. The form which the vision took tells what thoughts had been uppermost in his mind since his arrival the day before. He had been guided to the sea. Before his eyes were the islands which bridged the way to Europe. Perhaps for the first time the sense of his call to evangelize the Empire broke upon his mind, and he understood the full meaning of ‘far hence to the Gentiles’ (xxii. 21). Troas was the port from which travellers to Rome sailed to Neapolis, in order to strike the Egnatian road at Philippi. Was it not God’s will that he should cross to that Europe, the hills of which he saw for the first time behind the setting sun? It may well have been that such thoughts projected themselves into the vision which he saw in his sleep.<sup>a</sup>

**a man of Macedonia.** That he recognized the man as a Macedonian (who would have nothing in dress or language to distinguish him from other Greeks) looks as if he had already met him. Ramsay, following Renan, suggests that Luke was himself the ‘man of Macedonia’. If (but see on ver. 10) Luke was a native of Philippi, he may have spoken to Paul of the field that was open for the Gospel in Macedonia. This conjecture would explain the appearance of the ‘we’ at this point, and would suit the delicacy of Luke’s literary feeling. But it cannot be more than an attractive conjecture.<sup>b</sup>

**Come over.** The man stood for more than his own nation. It was the cry of the European world—the expression of the deep unrest felt at this time by all hearts that had risen above coarse pleasures and the fables of an immoral heathenism.<sup>c</sup>

**10. we.** This is the first of the ‘we’ sections. They are three in number, all describing voyages. (i) xvi. 10-17—Troas to Philippi. (ii) xx. 6-xxi. 18—Philippi to Jerusalem. (iii) xxvii. 1-xxviii. 16 Caesarea to Rome.

That Luke was not of the party before they reached Troas is certain. The pronoun ‘we’ would of itself be tolerably conclusive, but the change in the narrative is unmistakable. The minuteness of detail in what follows is in marked contrast to what precedes, in

<sup>a</sup> Hausrath, iii. 203; W. J. Woodhouse, *Encyc. Bibl.*, p. 2887; Purves, p. 185; Rackham, *Acts*; J. Robertson, p. 176; Stalker, p. 125.

<sup>b</sup> Gilbert, p. 113; Baring-Gould, p. 208; Harnack, *Acts*, p. 99.

<sup>c</sup> Baumgarten, ii. 110; Iverach, p. 86; Bungenier, p. 123.

which the events of months of travel are compressed into a few lines.<sup>a</sup>

**concluding.** The guidance of the Spirit does not dispense with the use of human reason and judgment. Paul evidently called in his companions to consult with him and talk the matter over.<sup>b</sup>

**LUKE.** He was a Gentile, not being 'of the circumcision' (Col. iv. 11, 14). But few Gentiles became Christians unless they had first been attracted by Judaism; and his references to Jewish feasts (e. g. xxvii. 9) suggest that he had before his conversion been in touch with the Judaism of the Dispersion.<sup>c</sup> It is probable that he was, like most physicians at that time, a freedman. Freedmen often bore contracted names, and Lucas is a contraction of Lucanus.<sup>d</sup> The style of his Gospel and of the Acts shows that he had received a liberal education.

He appears to have had some special connexion with Philippi. The 'we' begins when Paul was about to enter Macedonia, ceases when he left Philippi, and is resumed when he returned thither. But it is not likely that it was his birthplace. Eusebius<sup>e</sup> and the 'Argumentum Evangelii secundum Lucan' (early third century) agree in describing him as a native of Antioch. This tradition can scarcely have its origin in any particular statement in the Acts, but the book contains much which corroborates it by showing special interest in, and special knowledge of, the community there. Thus, while Luke does not give the birthplace even of Stephen, he records that Nicolas was 'a proselyte of Antioch' (vi. 5); his statement that the first preachers to Gentiles at Antioch were 'men of Cyprus and Cyrene' (xi. 20) implies local information; he knows that the name 'Christian' first arose there (xi. 26); he enumerates with distinguishing additions the names of the 'prophets and teachers' there (xiii. 1); he records that the first missionaries were dispatched thence (xiii. 3); and that the question about circumcision came to a crisis there (xv. 1).<sup>f</sup>

It is possible that he had been a fellow student of Paul at Tarsus, which stood high in reputation as a medical school. In that case we have an explanation of the absence of any record of their first meeting. It is further possible that they had worked together at Antioch; or that Paul, when stricken down by illness in Galatia, had sent for 'the beloved physician'. The 'us' of ver. 10 shows

<sup>a</sup> J. Robertson, p. 178.

<sup>b</sup> Row, p. 166; Maclaren, ii. 198.

<sup>c</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 20.

<sup>d</sup> L. Merivale, p. 189.

<sup>e</sup> *H. E.*, iii. 4, 6.

<sup>f</sup> Harnack, *Luke*, pp. 4, 21 seq.; Plumptre, *Acts*, p. 461.

that he was not a new convert, and he joins (ver. 13) in the work of evangelizing. His medical skill would be of use in gaining an opening for preaching the Gospel, as modern missionaries often find.<sup>a</sup>

His history owes much to the fact that he joined Paul at the critical moment when a special revelation led him to Europe. At the outset he was placed in a position to gain a wide survey of the course of the Gospel—such a survey as gives the tone to his history throughout.<sup>b</sup>

## 11-15

<sup>11</sup> Putting out therefore from Troas we made a straight course to Samothrace, and the day following to Neapolis, <sup>12</sup> and thence to Philippi, a chief city of the border country of Macedonia and a Roman colony: and we were in this city abiding certain days. <sup>13</sup> And on the sabbath we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spake to the women who came together. <sup>14</sup> And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, was a hearer; whose heart the Lord opened, to give heed to the things which were spoken by Paul. <sup>15</sup> And when she had been baptized, and her household, she besought us saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us.

**11. Putting out.** There is a strange contrast between this invasion of Europe by the Jew Paul and that of Asia, four centuries before, by the Macedonian Alexander. If the great conqueror brought the East under Greek civilization, the poor Jew founded a Christian civilization in the West which ultimately absorbed the other.<sup>c</sup>

When these four men went down to the quay of Troas to look for a vessel, how little the world thought, how little they themselves knew, what history they were making! Probably in Paul's mind the

<sup>a</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*, p. 408; Lewin, i. 197.

<sup>b</sup> Baumgarten, ii. 113.

<sup>c</sup> Maurice, p. 253.

passage to Europe was but one of many journeys. Yet it was one of the turning-points of history—the challenge of Christianity to Western civilization to accept the rule of Christ.<sup>a</sup>

**we made a straight course.** It is as though Luke saw in the favouring winds (Paul took five days for the return voyage, xx. 6) a contrast to the previous checks. The vivid details mark the eye-witness. How different is the bald ‘thence they sailed to Cyprus’ of xiii. 4.

**Neapolis.** The town was Thessalian and would be much like Troas, with the usual busy crowd of traders who thronged the Mediterranean ports. These were not the Macedonians to whom the vision had summoned them to minister; so they did not linger there.

**12. Philippi.** The ancient Datum had been renamed after himself by Philip of Macedon, the destroyer of Greek liberty. It was famous as the scene of the great victory of the Triumvirs Antony and Octavian over Brutus and Cassius, which decided the fate of the Empire. But these associations had no interest for Luke. His history was concerned with the greater battle now beginning between the new faith and the old-world idolatries.<sup>b</sup>

**a chief city.** The fullness of the description looks as though Luke’s long residence there gave him a patriotic pride in it. Of the five Roman colonies mentioned in the Acts—Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, Troas, Philippi, and Corinth—it is the only one which he so calls.<sup>c</sup>

**colony.** That is, a military settlement of veterans, who had farms assigned them. Here, to a much greater extent than in the Roman colonies of Asia, Paul found himself in the Romanized world. Latin was the official language. The constitution was that of Rome in miniature. In a sense, never before true, he had entered on the conquest of the Empire in the name of Christ.<sup>d</sup>

**abiding certain days.** They found no crowd of Macedonians eager to welcome them. But conscious of the Divine guidance they could afford to wait.<sup>e</sup>

**13. a river.** The Gargites flows one mile west of the town.<sup>f</sup>

**supposed.** They knew the Jewish custom of having their place of prayer near water for the sake of the ceremonial washings.

<sup>a</sup> Binney, p. 211; Thomas, *Acts*, p. 262; Burrell, p. 215.

<sup>b</sup> Stokes, ii. 274; L. Merivale, p. 191; Maurice, p. 255.

<sup>c</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 206.

<sup>d</sup> Norris, p. 82; Purves, p. 186; Stifler, p. 152.

<sup>e</sup> Burrell, p. 219; Binney, p. 213.

<sup>f</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.



**a place of prayer.** The Rabbinical rule was that ten men were required to constitute a synagogue; so that there were probably fewer here. The paucity of Jews is accounted for by the fact that Philippi was a military, not a commercial, city. In his anxiety to evangelize the first Macedonian town to which he came, Paul broke through his usual practice of not stopping in places where there was no synagogue (xvii. 1).<sup>a</sup>

**the women.** They may have been, like Eunice, the Jewish wives of Gentiles; but it is more likely that they were, like Lydia, proselytes, who wished to be faithful to their new religion even in the absence of any settled provision for their instruction.<sup>b</sup>

'Where is the man of Macedonia?' the missionaries might well have asked. But the fact that their first congregation at Philippi consisted of women was typical of the prominent part which women were destined to take in the Church founded there. And the men of Macedonia could not be better 'helped' than by raising and refining the women.<sup>c</sup>

**14. Lydia.** It was a common name (cf. Hor. *Odes*, i. 8. 1; iii. 9. 7, &c.); and, since racial names were usually borne by slaves, she may have been a freedwoman.<sup>d</sup> But perhaps the translation should be 'The Lydian': that is, she was popularly known in Philippi by the name of the country from which she came. Paul does not mention 'Lydia' in his letter. She may, of course, have died before he wrote, but it is possible that she is there alluded to under her own name, either Euodia or Syntyche (Phil. iv. 2).

**a seller of purple.** There was a large market for purple dye, as this was the colour of the stripe on the official toga at Rome and in Roman colonies. She may have been a widow carrying on her husband's trade.

**of Thyatira.** The existence of a guild of dyers at Thyatira is proved by inscriptions.<sup>e</sup> The town was a Macedonian colony,<sup>f</sup> and this may account for a trader of Thyatira being settled at Philippi.

**to give heed.** There was a Jewish settlement at Thyatira, and Lydia had probably become a proselyte there. But the Gospel which Paul preached rose in power above the Judaism to which she had already conformed. We need not suppose that she was converted on the first sabbath: the narrative is evidently condensed.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Iverach, p. 88; Stokes, ii. 277; Conybeare and Howson, i. 270; Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 227; Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> Gilbert, p. 115; J. C. Jones, p. 301.

<sup>d</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>e</sup> Ramsay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Thyatira.

<sup>f</sup> Strabo, xiii. 4.

<sup>g</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 214; Eadie, p. 144.

How unlike invention is the story! What an insignificant result after the double prohibition in Asia, the vision of Troas, the long voyage, the high expectation! One solitary convert, a woman, and she already a seeker after God, and a native of that very Asia where they had been forbidden to preach!<sup>a</sup> But that the first convert in Europe should be a woman was a prophecy of the happy change in the lot of women which Christianity was to effect. A new era had dawned for that half of mankind which had been neglected and oppressed through the ages. If man owes much to Christ, woman owes in one sense even more. He delivered her from being man's drudge or plaything, and raised her to be his friend and equal, to enter the Kingdom by his side. And woman has acknowledged the debt by sweetening homes and purifying social life.<sup>b</sup>

**15. baptized.** Probably not on the day of her conversion. Paul evidently stayed for some time at Philippi; and the words 'if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord' would most naturally imply some period of probation. (But see on ver. 33.)<sup>c</sup>

**and her household.** This statement cannot be claimed as any argument for infant baptism, since the Greek word may mean her servants or her workpeople. But as regards the baptism of infants, it must be remembered that at this time the status of the child was not separated in thought from that of the parent. Nor can the example of Jewish circumcision, to which baptism was early regarded as the Christian counterpart, have been without its effect.<sup>d</sup>

**if ye have.** They had recognized her faith by admitting her to baptism. If she was fit for that, surely she was fit to be their hostess.<sup>e</sup>

**come into my house.** Purple was a costly dye, and she was probably a rich woman.

**she constrained us.** It is clear that Paul demurred at first, and his acceptance of her hospitality was, so far as we know, a unique act on his part. He prized his independence too dearly to accept maintenance from his converts. But he probably felt that invaluable service might be rendered to the Gospel by these Macedonian women, who occupied a position of respect and freedom unknown in his experience of the women of Syria and Palestine.<sup>f</sup>

The fact that he accepted hospitality at Philippi and was compelled to work for his livelihood at Thessalonica (2 Thess. iii. 8) shows that

<sup>a</sup> Farrar, i. 487; Burrell, p. 222.

<sup>c</sup> Geikie, p. 385.

<sup>e</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> Stalker, p. 128; Noble, p. 63.

<sup>d</sup> Ropes, p. 198.

<sup>f</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, p. 115.

he had crossed the sea from Troas without funds for a sojourn in Europe. He had never contemplated such distant work when he started from Antioch.<sup>a</sup>

us. This word shows that Luke was not a householder in Philippi.<sup>b</sup>

## 16-34

<sup>16</sup> And it came to pass that, as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain maid having a spirit, a Pythoness, met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. <sup>17</sup> The same, following Paul and us, kept crying out, saying, These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation. <sup>18</sup> And this she did many days. But Paul, being sore vexed, turned and said to the spirit, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to depart from her. And he departed that very hour. <sup>19</sup> But when her masters saw that the hope of their gain had departed, they laid hold on Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market-place before the magistrates; <sup>20</sup> and when they had brought them to the Praetors, they said, These men, being Jews, are causing great disturbance in our city, <sup>21</sup> and proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to receive or to observe, being Romans. <sup>22</sup> And the multitude joined in the outcry against them; and the Praetors rent their garments off them and commanded to scourge them. <sup>23</sup> And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: <sup>24</sup> who, having received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. <sup>25</sup> But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup> And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 108.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 219.

the foundations of the prison-house were shaken ; and immediately all the doors were opened and every one's bonds were loosed. <sup>27</sup> And the jailor, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup> But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no hurt ; for we are all here. <sup>29</sup> And he called for lights and sprang in and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, <sup>30</sup> and brought them out and said, O my lords, what must I do to be saved ? <sup>31</sup> And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. <sup>32</sup> And they spake the word of the Lord to him, with all that were in his house. <sup>33</sup> And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes ; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. <sup>34</sup> And he brought them up into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly with all his house, having become a believer in God.

**16. it came to pass.** Luke gives no clue to the length of their stay ; but, as usual, he narrates the incident which led to their departure.<sup>a</sup>

**a Pythoness.** That is, having a spirit of divination from Pythian Apollo, coupled with the power of ventriloquizing. Plutarch says that a ventriloquist was called a Python.<sup>b</sup> Since Luke speaks in his Gospel of 'demoniacs', his use of this word shows that he is here employing the term used by the people of Philippi about the girl. It was inevitable that he should adopt the ideas and use the current phraseology of his time. In our day we do not look on such a phenomenon as the union of two personalities, but as a divided consciousness in one person.<sup>c</sup>

**her masters.** The gold-miners of the neighbourhood may have consulted her where to dig. At any rate, she was from her reputation as a fortune-teller so valuable a slave that it required the formation of a 'divination company' to purchase her. Luke has

<sup>a</sup> Iverach, p. 89.

<sup>b</sup> *Def. Orac.* 9.

<sup>c</sup> Plumptre, *Acts* ; Farrar, i. 491 ; Benson, p. 388.

already shown, in the case of Simon in Samaria and of Elymas in Paphos, how highly in this age of general unbelief and superstition diviners and soothsayers were honoured.<sup>a</sup>

**17. These men.** As the demoniac of Galilee had hailed Jesus as 'Son of the Most High God' (Luke viii. 28), so this poor slave bore testimony to the 'slaves of the Most High God'. Since she apparently frequented the road to the place of prayer, she may have been connected with Jews and have imbibed vague notions of the expected Messiah. And the preaching of Paul, the burden of which had evidently been the 'way of salvation', had powerfully wrought upon her disordered mind.<sup>b</sup>

**18. being sore vexed.** It has been seen (see on xiv. 14) how Paul resisted the temptation to accept and utilize the homage of the Lystraean. A yet subtler temptation was here. This slave girl's testimony was an acknowledgment and proclamation of a real truth. If she was possessed by a false spirit, so much the greater was the triumph of the truth which compelled such testimony. She was well known, and her utterances were regarded with reverence. Why not avail himself of her wide influence to further his evangelistic work? But, like his master (Luke viii. 29), Paul would receive no aid from such a source. That would be to confound the distinction between light and darkness, to confirm superstition, and to compromise his message.<sup>c</sup>

**he departed.** She had declared that they, like herself, were slaves of God, divinely inspired. So real was her belief in this fact that, on hearing Paul's words, she lost faith in herself and in her power of divination.<sup>d</sup> The deliverance of the slave girl is as typical as the conversion of Lydia. The two most important social revolutions worked by Christianity have been the elevation of women and the abolition of slavery.

**19. when her masters.** Luke characteristically enlarges his narrative, because this was the first example of a persecution not originated by Jews. Like the riot at Ephesus, it rose from threatened loss of profits. The capital which the shareholders had invested in the girl had suddenly been rendered unproductive; and they thought that if the superior influence of the strangers could be removed, she might recover her powers.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Baring-Gould, p. 216; Vaughan, ii. 305; Maurice, p. 258.

<sup>b</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 230; Eadie, p. 147; Lewin, i. 215.

<sup>c</sup> Maurice, p. 260; Purves, p. 186.

<sup>d</sup> C. H. Turner, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Philippi; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 216.

<sup>e</sup> Maurice, p. 262; Eadie, p. 148; Ramsay, *Pictures*, p. 182.



**and dragged . . . magistrates.** These words appear to be a marginal gloss on the following clause. Luke is not likely to have, so unnecessarily, used in successive lines both the Greek and the Roman designation of the officials.<sup>a</sup>

**20. the Praetors.** Roman colonies were governed by 'Duumvirs', but these usually assumed the courtesy title of 'Praetor'. As representing consuls, they were attended by lictors bearing rods.

**These men.** To claim that their slave had been deprived by exorcism of all commercial value would have been a plea which might redound to the credit of the strangers. So they devised a charge which would appeal at once to the popular dislike of Jews and to the colonial pride of the citizens.<sup>b</sup>

**being Jews.** The Jews were everywhere unpopular owing to their social exclusiveness and their success in trade. And to the Roman governors they were obnoxious on account of their stubborn and contumelious bearing. The recent decree of Claudius expelling them from Rome (xviii. 2) for tumultuous conduct gave a special sting to the present charge.

**21. not lawful.** Judaism was a 'lawful religion' in the Empire, and Jews were free to live as Jews; but to induce Roman citizens to adopt Jewish customs was quite another thing.<sup>c</sup> There was, however, no truth in the charge, since the missionaries were not seeking to make proselytes to Judaism.

**22. commanded.** The Praetors, seeing that the mere statement of the charge was causing a ferment among the people, and regarding the accused as two vagabond and seditious Jews on whom they could safely perpetrate any outrage, did not trouble to inquire into the matter, but summarily ordered them to be scourged.<sup>d</sup>

**23. many stripes.** A Roman scourging was a terrible ordeal, and this was of exceptional severity. How deeply Paul, a Roman citizen and gently nurtured, felt the indignity is shown by his statement to the Thessalonians that he had been 'shamefully treated at Philippi' (1 Thess. ii. 2).<sup>e</sup>

**24. having received such a charge.** It was a significant hint to deal as harshly as he chose with his prisoners.<sup>f</sup>

**the inner prison.** Probably a dark unventilated chamber further in the rock, foul and loathsome with filth and vermin. We know what the dungeons are like which may be seen in the ruins of feudal

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 217.

<sup>c</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>e</sup> Benson, p. 391.

<sup>b</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, p. 117; Purves, p. 186.

<sup>d</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, p. 119.

<sup>f</sup> Macduff, *Paul*, p. 187.

castles. And we know what prisons were in Christian London before the time of Howard. But, even so, we can scarcely realize the horrors of 'the inner prison' in a pagan provincial town of the first century.<sup>a</sup>

**made their feet fast.** This refinement of cruelty reveals the character of the man. The inner prison must have been safe enough. But a Roman soldier was not likely to be a gentle person, and the work of a provincial jailor would not be humanizing.

**25. singing hymns.** Truly, 'Stone walls do not a prison make.'<sup>b</sup> Paul must have been tempted to think that the 'man of Macedonia' was no heaven-sent vision, but had originated in his own disordered imagination. He must have been saddened by the discovery that the same hostility which the Jews had shown to the Gospel was being shown by the Gentiles. He must have been smarting under a sense of unjust treatment (ver. 37). He must have felt that there was every prospect of further danger and ill-treatment before him. But as he and Silas sat on the foul floor, their backs torn by the scourge, their wrists galled by fetters, their feet fastened in the stocks so as to make change of posture difficult and sleep impossible, these men did not complain, did not merely pray—that would not be so wonderful—but burst into songs of praise. No event in Paul's life reveals, as does this midnight scene in the Philippian dungeon, what the grace of God can enable His saints to be!<sup>c</sup>

**were listening.** No wonder! Such sounds had never been heard before in a prison. But neither had any prison ever held such prisoners.<sup>d</sup>

**26. a great earthquake.** Luke had not been arrested, and so cannot speak in the first person of what happened in the prison.<sup>e</sup> But he evidently regarded the earthquake as an answer to their prayers—as something which, if not in itself miraculous, was providential in its opportuneness. A secret spring had been touched on earth, and the effect was instantaneously felt in heaven.<sup>f</sup>

**shaken.** If the prison was excavated in the rock, it is intelligible that a shock, which would have thrown down a building, might produce the effects described. The doors were probably secured by bars which slipped from their sockets, and the prisoners chained to staples which fell out from the walls.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 232; Farrar, i. 497.

<sup>b</sup> Lovelace.

<sup>c</sup> Noble, p. 90; Baumgarten, ii. 126.

<sup>d</sup> Iverach, p. 92.

<sup>e</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 219.

<sup>f</sup> Baumgarten, ii. 128; Gilbert, p. 117; Ramsden, ii. 26.

<sup>g</sup> Rackham, *Acts*; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 221.

27. **to kill himself.** By Roman military law he was answerable with his life for the custody of his prisoners (xii. 19). Suicide was among the Romans at this time the popular means of escape from trouble. At this very Philippi Brutus had 'fled, not with feet, but with hands'.

28. **Paul cried.** As usual, he showed self-possession in danger and unselfish thought for others.

29. **fell down.** Paul's words freed him from one fear, only to rouse another. Who were these men? He had no experience of prisoners who requited his cruel treatment with concern for his welfare and sacrificed their chance of escape to save him from suicide.<sup>a</sup>

30. **my lords.** They have suddenly become persons to be treated with respect and reverence. The earthquake might, he thought, be the expression of some deity's anger at their harsh treatment.<sup>b</sup>

**to be saved.** Saved from what? He may have heard of the strange words of the divining girl about these men 'showing a way of salvation'. But it is more likely that he vaguely sought deliverance from the dangers, seen and unseen, which beset him.<sup>c</sup>

31. **Believe.** They answer him according to the deepest sense of his words. If he meant temporal salvation, they will mean spiritual. If he called them lords and appealed to them for safety, they will tell him of the Lord who alone could save him.<sup>d</sup>

32. **they spake.** Paul must have begun to understand the meaning of his stripes. He allows no plea of weariness or suffering to excuse him from seizing an opportunity of preaching the Gospel.

33. **washed their stripes.** Faith bears fruit in action. At once he seeks to repair the past neglect and to atone for the brutality of the stocks.<sup>e</sup>

**was baptized.** The same apparent prematureness strikes us as in Philip's baptism of the eunuch (viii. 38). What could a man, brutalized by his calling, learn of the Christian faith in a few short hours? The narrative expressly says that there was no delay—'the same hour of the night' and 'immediately'. But the faith required was not faith in a set of doctrines, but faith in a living Person; and baptism was regarded as matriculation, not graduation, in the school of Christ.<sup>f</sup>

34. **food.** They had probably been fasting for some twenty hours.  
**rejoiced.** Luke notes, as usual, the joy of conversion.

<sup>a</sup> Maclaren, ii. 120; Row, p. 174.

<sup>b</sup> Iverach, p. 93; Stokes, ii. 287.

<sup>c</sup> Maurice, p. 264.

<sup>d</sup> Maurice, p. 265.

<sup>e</sup> Arnot, p. 352.

<sup>f</sup> Goulburn, p. 352; Maurice, p. 265.

The three conversions at Philippi which Luke narrates—the Asiatic Lydia, the Greek slave, the Roman soldier—illustrate the universality of the Gospel.<sup>a</sup>

THE EARTHQUAKE AT PHILIPPI.—It would not be honest to conceal the difficulty of reconciling the above narrative with Paul's own words, written only a few months after the event, to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. ii. 2), 'Having suffered before, and been shamefully treated, as ye know, at Philippi, we waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God in much conflict.' He says nothing here of any miraculous deliverance at Philippi. He speaks of his suffering and shameful treatment in that city, and glories in the fact that, in spite of this heavy discouragement, he is still bold to preach the Gospel to the Thessalonians. But he does not suggest that his 'boldness in God' was due to any direct interposition of God on his behalf. Yet it is hard to believe that the Apostle, who thankfully records every token of the Divine favour, would have told of his harsh treatment and said nothing of his release by a miracle.<sup>b</sup> Similarly, in his letter to the Philippians (i. 30) he speaks of their 'having the same conflict which ye saw in me'; but again without any reference to this miraculous deliverance.

Nor is there any allusion in the subsequent narrative of the Acts itself to the earthquake and its consequences. The natural inference from ver. 35 would be that it was the realization of the illegality and unbecoming haste of their action which led the Praetors to release the prisoners on the following morning without further examination of their case.<sup>c</sup>

If it be urged that the story must be historical because it occurs in a part of the narrative in which Luke was himself an actor, it may be pointed out that there is no trace of the 'we' in the account of the earthquake, the third person being resumed after ver. 17. Hence Harnack may be right<sup>d</sup> in regarding verses 24-34 as a later interpolation. It will be noticed that verses 23 and 35 cohere well. It is, however, better to suppose that Luke, writing many years after the events which he is narrating, made use of a source containing legendary accretions which had grown round the fact of the conversion of the jailor by his prisoners. There is a significant resemblance between the three narratives in the Acts of the release of Apostles from imprisonment by miraculous intervention (v. 19 seq.; xii. 7 seq.;

<sup>a</sup> Iverach, p. 94.

<sup>b</sup> J. Thomas, p. 98; Hausrath, iii. 207 seq.

<sup>c</sup> McGiffert, p. 242; Bacon, p. 160.

<sup>d</sup> *Acts*, pp. 206, 231.

xvi. 24 seq.). And as regards the particular form which the present tradition assumed, a parallel may be found in St. Matthew's double narrative (xxvii. 51 ; xxviii. 2) of an earthquake, which is not mentioned by the other Synoptists ; and which Plummer thinks<sup>a</sup> that the Evangelist, or his source, may have conjectured as a cause of the extraordinary phenomena which he had to relate.

## 35-40

<sup>35</sup> But when it was day, the Praetors sent the lictors, saying, Let those men go. <sup>36</sup> And the jailor reported the words to Paul, saying, The Praetors have sent to let you go : now therefore depart, and go in peace. <sup>37</sup> But Paul said to them, They beat us publicly uncondemned, men that are Romans, and cast us into prison, and do they now cast us out privily? No, indeed! Let them come themselves and bring us out. <sup>38</sup> And the lictors reported these things to the Praetors ; and they feared when they heard that they were Romans : <sup>39</sup> and they came and besought them ; and having brought them out, they asked them to leave the city. <sup>40</sup> And they departed from the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia ; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them, and departed.

**35. the Praetors sent.** The earthquake (if the above narrative be historical), which the Romans commonly regarded as a token of the anger of the gods, may have roused their superstitious fears. But it is more likely that they felt that their action had been hasty and unjust. Roman magistrates were generally fair. Or Lydia, who seems to have been a person of some importance, may have lodged a remonstrance against their treatment of inoffensive strangers who were her friends, and mentioned the fact that they were Roman citizens.<sup>b</sup>

**36. go in peace.** It is clear that the jailor in his simplicity carried the news with eager satisfaction.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *St. Matthew*, p. 415.

<sup>b</sup> Benson, p. 393 ; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 223 ; Fouard, *Paul*, p. 121.

<sup>c</sup> Row, p. 175.



37. **But Paul said.** There is a meekness which is Christian ; but there is also a mistaken meekness, which, in failing to acknowledge the rights given by God, dishonours them. Paul did not think that Christ's law bound a man to tolerate gross injustice. He might personally forgive the wrong done to himself ; but a public wrong had been done to justice and to religion. For the sake of others these provincial magistrates must be taught not to use mob law : and for the sake of the Church at Philippi it was necessary to establish the claim of the Gospel to the respect of the heathen. He and Silas could not remain, but he intended to leave Luke behind ; and it might save much trouble and suffering in the future, if it were openly declared that their preaching was not immoral or revolutionary.<sup>a</sup>

**uncondemned.** The Greek word can only mean this ; but since a citizen could not lawfully be scourged even after condemnation, the expression used by Paul was probably a Latin one meaning 'without a hearing' ; and Luke translated it (as again in xxii. 25) by an inadequate Greek word.<sup>b</sup>

**men that are Romans.** The scourging of a citizen was forbidden by the Valerian Law, B.C. 508, and the prohibition was re-enacted by the Porcian Law, B.C. 300. That these Praetors did not, any more than Claudius Lysias (xxii. 27), question Paul's statement is explained by the fact that it was a capital offence to make a false claim to citizenship. But why, it may be asked, had not the missionaries declared their citizenship before being scourged ? It is usually said that the proceedings had been so tumultuous that their cry, 'we are Romans', was not heard. A more reasonable explanation would be that Silas was not a citizen, and that Paul held his tongue because he would not save himself and leave his companion to suffer. The plural need not, in that case, be regarded as a mistake on Luke's part, since it would be natural enough in Paul's mouth if the offence had been committed against himself only. The difficulty, however, is not really met thus, because this instance does not stand alone. Paul says (2 Cor. xi. 25) that he *thrice* received a Roman scourging. Hence we can only conclude that, though he availed himself of his privileges on one occasion (xxii. 25), he must, on others, have for some reason deliberately chosen to be silent about his citizenship (see on xxii. 25).

38. **they feared.** That a Roman citizen should have been scourged in a Roman colony was an enormity which, if it became known, would not only involve them in trouble at Rome, but be keenly resented

<sup>a</sup> Stifler, p. 161 ; Stokes, ii. 290 ; Barnes, p. 167 ; Farrar, i. 501 ; Birks, p. 217.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 225.

by the colonists of Philippi, jealous as they were of their rights and privileges as citizens.<sup>a</sup>

40. **they departed.** Paul left Luke and Timothy behind to consolidate the work. Luke, for all that we know to the contrary, remained till Paul's return some six years later: Timothy rejoined him at Beroea (see on xvii. 15). How long his own stay at Philippi had lasted we cannot say; but it must have been for several weeks at least, since his preaching laid the foundation of a flourishing Church, and he made friendships there which were among the truest of his life. The field was in every way more hopeful than any in which he had previously laboured. He had not, as in the past, to deal with effeminate Syrians or fickle Galatians; nor did he encounter here the corruption which he afterwards found in the more polished Greek society of the south. In the Macedonians still lingered something of the grit and vigour and courage which four centuries before had made them the conquerors of the world.<sup>b</sup> Hence in his letter to the Philippians, written some ten years later, he uses more endearing terms than to any other Church. They are his 'dearly beloved and longed for, his joy and crown' (iv. 1): he has no syllable of rebuke for them; he can only 'thank his God upon all his remembrance of them' (i. 3). We only gauge the full significance of his acceptance of pecuniary help from them—twice at Thessalonica (Phil. iv. 16), at Corinth (2 Cor. xi. 9), and at Rome (Phil. iv. 16)—when we remember that in so doing he departed from a custom which elsewhere was with him a settled principle.<sup>c</sup> Yet they were not, with the exception of Lydia, wealthy; they gave out of their deep poverty (2 Cor. viii. 2). The explanation may, in part at least, be found in the presence at Philippi of the 'loved physician', who so well knew his infirmities and needs.

## CHAPTER XVII

### I-9

<sup>1</sup> Now when they had journeyed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> And Paul, as his custom was, went in to them and for three sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> expounding and proving

<sup>a</sup> *Life*, c. iii.

<sup>b</sup> Kitto, p. 363; Row, p. 176.

<sup>c</sup> Stalker, p. 127; Hausrath, iii. 203 seq.

<sup>d</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 236; F. B. Meyer, p. 117; Weizsäcker, i. 280.

that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead ; and that the Jesus, whom he was proclaiming to them, was the Christ. <sup>4</sup> And some of them were convinced and threw in their lot with Paul and Silas ; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. <sup>5</sup> But the Jews, being moved with jealousy, took to them certain ill-conditioned fellows of the rabble, and gathering a crowd filled the city with uproar ; and attacking the house of Jason sought to bring them forth to the people. <sup>6</sup> And when they found them not, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the burgomasters, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also : <sup>7</sup> whom Jason hath received ; and these all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. <sup>8</sup> And they troubled the multitude and the burgomasters, when they heard these things. <sup>9</sup> And having taken security of Jason and the rest, they let them go.

1. **through Amphipolis.** They travelled along the Egnatian road which ran from Byzantium to the Adriatic. Since no towns but Amphipolis and Apollonia are mentioned, it has been supposed<sup>a</sup> that Paul halted only there, doing the stages of thirty-three, thirty, and thirty-seven miles on successive days, and this after his terrible scourging. And the reason usually given why he did not stop at these towns for missionary work is that they were without synagogues. But the narrative is so condensed that such assumptions must be received with caution. He may just as well have halted for a week as for a day in each town. And as regards preaching there, no inference can be safely drawn from Luke's silence. We should never have known of the foundation of a permanent Church at Beroea but for his accidental mention (xx. 4) of the name of a Beroean among the delegates who accompanied Paul with contributions for the poor of Jerusalem.<sup>b</sup>

**Thessalonica.** The ancient Therma had been thus re-named by

<sup>a</sup> Benson, p. 400.

<sup>b</sup> Dobschütz, p. 81.

Cassander after his wife, a sister of Alexander the Great. It was, with the sole exception of Syrian Antioch, the most important town in which Paul had yet preached. Along the Egnatian road merchants and legionaries were continually passing. At the very centre of this tide of travel, and boasting also the finest harbour on the coast, stood Thessalonica. Owing to this ceaseless coming and going the Gospel preached there was so quickly carried elsewhere that only a few months after his departure Paul could write (1 Thess. i. 8), 'From you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to Godward is gone forth.'<sup>a</sup>

**2. as his custom was.** Though he had been summoned to Europe to help 'a man of Macedonia', he did not change his practice of speaking first to his own countrymen.

**three Sabbath days.** The three Sabbaths must be understood as the period of work in the Synagogue. His stay must have been much longer. The words quoted above from 1 Thess. i. 8 imply an extended sojourn; as does the statement to the Philippians (iv. 16), 'In Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity,' since Philippi was more than a hundred miles distant. And in spite of this aid, he had to 'work night and day' (1 Thess. ii. 9) for his support. Further, the Church seems to have consisted mainly of Gentile converts (2 Thess. iii. 7, 8, and see on ver. 4), and to have been formally organized (1 Thess. v. 12).<sup>b</sup>

Paul's refusal to accept maintenance from his converts at Thessalonica ('That we might not burden any of you', 1 Thess. ii. 9) may imply that his different action at Philippi had given rise to injurious reports.<sup>c</sup> As Thessalonica was noted for its textile productions, he would have no difficulty in finding employment as a tent-maker.<sup>d</sup>

**3. expounding.** Paul gives a hint of the heated discussions which took place, when he says (1 Thess. ii. 2) that he preached 'in much conflict'. The Cross was 'unto the Jews a stumbling-block' (1 Cor. i. 23). It was hard for those, who had fed their imagination with the glowing pictures in the Old Testament of the Messiah's Kingdom and ignored the lines of prophecy which spoke of His suffering and humiliation, to re-read the Scriptures in a new light.<sup>e</sup>

**4. some of them.** The contrast of these words with 'a great multitude', and the distinction made (ver. 11) between the Jews of

<sup>a</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, p. 126.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 228; Gilbert, p. 121.

<sup>c</sup> Weizsäcker, i. 288.

<sup>d</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, p. 127; Baring-Gould, p. 221.

<sup>e</sup> Maclaren, ii. 133; Iverach, p. 101.

Thessalonica and those of Beroea, confirm the inference to be drawn from the letters that the Church at Thessalonica was predominantly Gentile. The disciples are said (1 Thess. i. 9) to have 'turned to God from idols'; and the Jewish Scriptures are not referred to.

**devout Greeks.** The expression probably means here heathens honestly in search of truth; though it usually denotes Gentiles who had embraced the worship of Jehovah as they had learnt it from the synagogue.<sup>a</sup>

**the chief women.** In Macedonia women occupied a freer and more influential position than in Greece proper.<sup>b</sup>

**not a few.** The statement must be received with caution, since Luke was not present, and Paul himself implies (1 Thess. iv. 11) that his converts came mainly from the industrial classes, and speaks (2 Cor. viii. 2) of the 'deep poverty' of the Macedonian Churches.<sup>c</sup>

**5. moved with jealousy.** The statement is confirmed by Paul's words (1 Thess. ii. 16), 'Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved.' Here, as at Corinth, where the Jewish colony was in constant communication by sea with Palestine, the opposition of the Jews to Paul was specially active.

**fellows of the rabble.** The Greek word means 'market-loungers'. The contempt for manual labour in slave communities led to the existence of numerous worthless idlers; and in a seaport there would be the usual loafers about the wharves ready to be hired for any work.<sup>d</sup>

**Jason.** Evidently he was Paul's host, and may have been a dealer in goat-hair stuffs; perhaps a Gentile convert, since the name is that of an ancient king of Thessaly. But it was also a favourite name for Jews to assume, if their Hebrew name was Joshua.<sup>e</sup> If he is the same as the Jason of Romans xvi. 21, he was a Jew, for Paul there calls him his 'kinsman'.

**6. the burgomasters.** The Greek word occurs nowhere else in Greek literature, but is found in an inscription (now in the British Museum) from an Arch at Thessalonica, erected in memory of the victory of Philippi, and demolished in A.D. 1867.<sup>f</sup> It is a striking illustration of the accuracy of Luke, who, at a time when various forms of government existed in the cities of the Empire, writes with unflinching correctness of the 'Proconsul' in Cyprus and in Achaia, the 'Praetors' at Philippi, and the 'Primate' in Melita.

<sup>a</sup> Davies, p. 114.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 227.

<sup>c</sup> Hausrath, iii. 211.

<sup>d</sup> Farrar, i. 513; Binney, p. 222.

<sup>e</sup> Josephus, *Antiq.* xii. 5. 1.

<sup>f</sup> W. J. Woodhouse, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 5047.



**the world.** The Greek word denotes the Roman world. News of the disturbances at Rome and the expulsion of the Jews by Claudius may have just reached Thessalonica. Even so, the charge is a tribute to the influence exercised by the missionaries. And it was true in another sense than the accusers meant. Though it sounds like mere frenzy as directed against two poor tent-makers, the instinct that framed it was prophetic. Christianity is revolutionary. It revolutionizes individuals, and through them revolutionizes society.<sup>a</sup>

**7. another king.** Here were Jews disclaiming their nation's dearest hope; declaring, like the crowd before Pilate, that they had 'no king but Caesar' (John xix. 15). We know from Paul's letters to the Thessalonians that the Second Coming of Christ had been a leading topic of his teaching. Perhaps the prevalence of vice in a great seaport led him to lay stress on the impending Judgment; perhaps, after his suffering experience at Philippi, his thoughts turned specially to the approaching end of the trial-time of life and the coming glories of the Redeemer's Kingdom. Anyhow, it was not unnatural that those who were only half-informed should interpret his words literally. Hence the charge would have a semblance of truth. Paul had preached 'another king', though not in any political or treasonable sense.<sup>b</sup>

**8. they troubled.** In a 'free city', like Thessalonica, there was a dread of anything being done which could give the Romans a pretext for taking away their cherished privileges.

**9. taken security.** If Jason undertook that Paul should leave the town and not return, we have an explanation of his inability to revisit the city when he greatly wished to do so (1 Thess. ii. 17, 18).<sup>c</sup>

**let them go.** The culprits were not before them; and the only charge which could be brought against Jason was that he had harboured men who were teachers of sedition. Unlike the praetors of Philippi, the burgomasters had no sympathy with the dregs of the populace stirred up by Jews, and they were content with an assurance that the causes of disturbance should leave the city.

Though Paul's work here was broken off by persecution, its success was marked. The Thessalonians received his teaching as 'the word of God' (1 Thess. ii. 13); rejoiced in their afflictions (1 Thess. i. 6; ii. 14); became an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. i. 7, 8). He speaks of them as his 'glory and joy' (1 Thess.

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 114; Maurice, p. 275; Maclaren, ii. 136.

<sup>b</sup> J. Robertson, p. 197; McGiffert, p. 248; L. Merivale, p. 204.

<sup>c</sup> Johnston, p. 114.

ii. 20). There is abundant evidence in the letters that in leaving them he left his heart behind him. Two of them, Aristarchus and Secundus, accompanied him on his last visit to Jerusalem (xx. 4), and the former went with him to Rome (xxvii. 2).<sup>a</sup>

## 10-15

<sup>10</sup> And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night to Beroea; and their escort, having reached the synagogue of the Jews, departed. <sup>11</sup> Now these men were of nobler temper than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily whether these things were so. <sup>12</sup> Many of them therefore believed; and of the Greek women of rank and of men not a few. <sup>13</sup> But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Beroea also, they came, stirring up and troubling the multitudes there likewise. <sup>14</sup> But the brethren then immediately sent away Paul in the direction of the coast, while both Silas and Timothy stayed behind there. <sup>15</sup> But they that conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and taking an urgent message from him to Silas and Timothy to join him with all speed they departed.

**10. by night.** This shows that Paul and Silas were in hiding and in real danger. The moderation of the authorities would be an ineffectual protection for poor Jews from the violence of a mob. We learn from the letters (1 Thess. ii. 14, iii. 1-5; 2 Thess. i. 6) that their departure was followed by a persecution of the Christians which caused Paul the gravest anxiety during the next few months.<sup>b</sup> Probably he did not know, when he left, of the pledge that had been exacted from Jason. He fully meant (1 Thess. ii. 17, 18) to return soon.

**their escort.** Probably they were Gentile converts, who had not been proselytes and therefore were not at home in the synagogue.

**the synagogue.** Considering the treatment which Paul had

<sup>a</sup> Gilbert, p. 122.

<sup>b</sup> Johnston, p. 114; Farrar, i. 515; Rackham, *Acts*.

recently received at Thessalonica from the Jews and the Gentiles respectively, it might have been expected that he would preach at once to the latter. But such was his love to his countrymen that no persecution on their part could shake it.<sup>a</sup>

**11. received the word.** In this remote town the Jews welcomed visitors of their own race, and gave an unprejudiced hearing to their message.<sup>b</sup>

**examining the Scriptures.** Paul had based his message on the Scriptures, but his interpretation of them was new to the Bereans, and they set themselves to examine its grounds.<sup>c</sup> Nowhere else did he encounter Jews so candid and reasonable.

**12. Many believed.** And the others did not persecute him.<sup>d</sup>  
**therefore.** Luke has a grand confidence in the result of such methods.

**13. when the Jews.** The Jews who lived out of Palestine, being chiefly engaged in commercial pursuits, were in constant intercourse, and the news would soon be carried to Thessalonica.<sup>e</sup> The unsleeping hatred, which thus pursued Paul like a sleuthhound, recalls their similar action at Lystra (xiv. 19). Probably this is what he was referring to when he wrote (1 Thess. ii. 18) that 'Satan hindered' him from returning to the converts over whom he yearned, feeling that he had left them to bear the brunt of the hatred which his teaching had provoked. When the Jews from Thessalonica followed him to Berea and hounded him thence, he abandoned the hope of returning for the present.<sup>f</sup>

**troubling.** The word suggests that the same accusation was brought against him as at Thessalonica, and he was compelled by much the same process to leave Berea.<sup>g</sup> The length of his stay is quite uncertain, but it must have been some months. In his anxiety to re-visit Thessalonica, only fifty miles distant, he lingered in the neighbourhood as long as possible. Though the Berean Church is not mentioned in the Epistles, the appearance of a Berean (xx. 4) among the delegates who carried to Jerusalem the great collection for the poor proves that lasting results were effected.<sup>h</sup>

**14. immediately.** It is likely that Paul's health had not recovered from the shock of his terrible experience at Philippi and the more recent danger at Thessalonica; and the disciples dared not expose

<sup>a</sup> Lewin, i. 236.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Pictures*, p. 191.

<sup>c</sup> Iverach, p. 105.

<sup>d</sup> Gilbert, p. 123.

<sup>e</sup> Row, p. 179.

<sup>f</sup> J. Robertson, p. 220.

<sup>g</sup> Iverach, p. 106; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 232.

<sup>h</sup> Conybeare and Howson, i. 314; Weizsäcker, i. 279.

him to a fresh attack. It is clear from his letters that he did not regard his work in Macedonia as completed, but meant to return. If he had been deliberately starting for prolonged work in Achaia, he would have waited in the neighbourhood for his companions to join him. But the Jews were on his track and his life was in danger ; and he quitted Macedonia hurriedly.<sup>a</sup>

**in the direction of the coast.** It is generally held that he was conducted to Dium, sixteen miles away on the coast, to take the first boat that offered, without any fixed plan of going to Athens. And, it is true, the absence of any mention of places between Beroea and Athens is in favour of their having gone by sea. But otherwise the language implies that they started in the direction of the coast, in order to throw pursuers off the scent ; and then went to Athens by land. His escort would not have *sailed* with him, unless he was too ill to look after himself ; and his action at Athens seems to negative such a supposition.<sup>b</sup>

**Silas and Timothy.** They had not been left behind, as Luke had apparently been left at Philippi, to consolidate the work, since Paul immediately sent for them ; but they remained to screen his flight. It is evidence of his dominating personality that it was *his* blood that was wanted. The others were of small account.<sup>c</sup> Until the return of the escort they would not know where they were to rejoin him.

**15. an urgent message.** So far as we know, Paul was, for the first time since he began his missionary travels, absolutely without a companion. The word 'urgent' and the following words 'with all speed' show how keenly he felt his loneliness.

There is some uncertainty as to the movements of Silas and Timothy at this time. Luke, being at Philippi, probably did not know accurately what took place. The inference from xviii. 5 is that he thought that Paul left Athens before their arrival, and that they only rejoined him at Corinth. But Paul implies in his letters (1 Thess. iii. 1, 6) that they did, in fact, rejoin him at Athens, and were thence despatched by him, Timothy to Thessalonica, and Silas to Philippi. The latter brought a contribution from the Philippians (2 Cor. xi. 9 ; Phil. iv. 15), and, having been joined by Timothy from Thessalonica, went on with him to Corinth. The two accounts are not absolutely contradictory, since Luke does not expressly exclude

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 115.

<sup>b</sup> Rendall, *Expositor*, iii, 8, 120.

<sup>c</sup> Johnston, p. 115.

their arrival at Athens ; but he could scarcely have written as he did if he had known of it.<sup>a</sup>

The natural inference from the fact that Timothy, and not the more experienced Silas, was sent to Thessalonica is that he had not been with Paul and Silas there, but had stayed with Luke at Philippi and only rejoined them at Beroea. Hence he could be sent to Thessalonica, since the security given by Jason related to Paul and Silas only. The way in which Paul describes him (1 Thess. iii. 2), as 'our brother and God's minister in the Gospel of Christ', looks as though he was introducing one whom they had not seen.<sup>b</sup>

The Macedonian mission was Paul's most fruitful work up to this time. Though Luke mentions only three cities—Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea—it is clear from the letters (1 Thess. i. 7 seq.) that Christianity was very shortly widespread ; and there can be little doubt that Paul did other work which Luke's sources did not record. He tells the Romans (xv. 19) that he had preached as far as Illyricum ; and it is not easy to say when, if not now, he could have done so. When he later passed through Macedonia on his way to Corinth (xx. 1), he was in too great anxiety about the state of the Corinthian Church to have undertaken an extended missionary tour there ; and we know of no other time before the date of his letter to the Romans when he could have gone thither.<sup>c</sup>

## 16-21

<sup>16</sup> Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld the city filled with idols. <sup>17</sup> He reasoned therefore in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and daily in the market-place with those that fell in with him. <sup>18</sup> But certain also of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, What might this charlatan say ? Others, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange divinities ; because he preached Jesus and the Resurrection. <sup>19</sup> And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new teaching of thine is ? <sup>20</sup> For thou

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 116 ; McGiffert, p. 257.

<sup>b</sup> Binney, p. 230.

<sup>c</sup> McGiffert, p. 254.



bringest certain strange things to our ears : we would know, therefore, what these things mean. (<sup>21</sup> Now all the Athenians and the foreigners residing there had leisure for nothing else but either to tell or to hear the last new thing.)

16. **waited for them.** He had gone to Athens as a retreat only, with no intention of working there. So far as he had any plans for Achaia, his mind was probably already fixed on Corinth as a more important centre. Another man would have welcomed a quiet breathing-space in which to recover from the strain of his recent experiences. But Paul was not a good 'waiter', nor was Athens a place in which he could be idle. The idolatry of the city provoked in him a paroxysm of zeal. He did not reason that he was one of an unpopular race, alone in a strange land ; nor was he deterred by the memory of the perils from which he had so lately escaped. None of these thoughts crossed his mind. He saw souls perishing, and he could not hold his peace. Single-handed and alone he threw himself into the arena to do battle for God and truth.<sup>a</sup>

**Athens.** Captured by Sulla in 86 B.C., Athens was politically now of little consequence, but was still of importance as the University of Rome.

**filled with idols.** The description is no figure of speech. For though Paul, misled by his Jewish prejudices, may have, as Renan suggests, wrongly taken all the statues which he saw for 'objects of worship' (ver. 23), yet Pausanias says that there were more statues in Athens than in all the rest of Greece put together. According to Pliny, it contained in the time of Nero more than three thousand. Petronius says that it was easier to meet a god there than a man. Paul had seen many Pagan cities, but never before had he seen the Second Commandment so aggressively violated ; so much art and wealth lavished on idolatry ; the highest culture so strangely allied with superstition.

It must be remembered that nothing in his mental history had prepared him to feel as we feel in the presence of the monuments of Athens. A 'Hebrew of Hebrews', he was indifferent to the history of heathen peoples. To him Athens was not the city with the glorious past, but only the embodiment of that idolatry which Christianity

<sup>a</sup> Parker, ii. 192 ; Arnot, p. 375 ; J. C. Ryle, *Oxford and Cambridge Journals*, 1880 ; W. Alexander, p. 12.

came to destroy. As his Master, when the disciples called His attention to the grandeur of the Temple, thought only of the people and the coming desolation, so any admiration which Paul might have felt was swallowed up in pity and sorrow that men of high intelligence and culture should be morally so ignorant and fallen.<sup>a</sup>

**17. therefore.** His object was not, as in other cities, to offer the Gospel first to his own countrymen and to the proselytes gathered round them: he went to the synagogue to enlist their sympathy against the surrounding idolatry. But the Jewish colony was not large, since the commercial Corinth offered more attractions than Athens; and the Athenian Jews appear to have been themselves tainted with the prevailing superstition and frivolity of the city. Custom had deadened their sense of the heinousness of idolatry. So Paul, failing to stir them to the level of his own feeling, carried his activities elsewhere.<sup>b</sup>

**in the market-place.** This was the centre of public life at Athens. Paul, with the amazing versatility which enabled him to become all things to all men, adapted himself to the conditions. No ordinary Jew could have entered into the spirit of the place as he did, and have excited sufficient interest among its philosophers to make them ask for a statement of his teaching. Centuries before, Socrates had stood there, disputing 'with those that fell in with him', trying to make them think seriously of truth and righteousness. Now a Christian Socrates was striving with like earnestness to lead the people to higher things. And Paul was fitted, both by training and by natural gifts, for the task. In his native Tarsus he must have come into contact with inquirers similar to those whom he now encountered; and the ready answers to objectors, the rapid transitions, the quick turns of thought, in which his letters abound, show how well equipped he was for the Socratic form of discussion.<sup>c</sup>

**18. But certain.** There is a curious parallel in the life of Apollonius of Tyana.<sup>d</sup> On his way from Piraeus to the city he met many philosophers, reading or arguing, all of whom greeted him.<sup>e</sup>

**Epicurean and Stoic.** These were the only philosophies which at this time possessed any vitality.<sup>f</sup> Both were fundamentally antagonistic to the Gospel. In Epicureanism man's sensual nature, in

<sup>a</sup> Shakspeare, p. 31; Mackenzie, p. 151.

<sup>b</sup> Shakspeare, p. 47; Haweis, p. 113; Iverach, p. 107.

<sup>c</sup> Stalker, p. 132; F. B. Meyer, p. 121; Iverach, p. 108; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 264.

<sup>d</sup> *Philos. Vita*, iv. 17.

<sup>e</sup> W. J. Woodhouse, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 382.

<sup>f</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

Stoicism his intellectual pride, were arrayed against Christianity. What could be more opposed to the doctrine of self-sacrifice and the belief in a personal God, with whom man could hold communion, than the self-indulgence of Epicureanism and its theory of gods who dwelt apart, serenely indifferent to men? What could be more opposed to the doctrine of the Cross, in which the axe was laid at the root of self-confidence and trust in human merit, than the system of Stoicism, which was based on pride in self, on the power of man to work out his own release, and substituted for the Holy Spirit the resistance of a stubborn human will?<sup>a</sup>

**charlatan**, or 'quack'. The Greek word, meaning literally 'a seed-pecker', was used as a name for a rook; and so came to be used for a noisy, empty babbler. The use of this Athenian slang-word shows that Luke derived his information from a good source, probably Paul himself.

It would have seemed a triumph for the Gospel, if it could have won converts from the ranks of scholars in the centre of Greek refinement. But Luke is honest, and records no such triumph. Paul is ridiculed, and his message treated with contempt. But what a lesson to learned men not to scoff at what seems to them absurd!<sup>b</sup> Paul was the real master of all these philosophers, and they the 'quack-teachers'.

**a setter forth of strange divinities.** The identical charge which had been brought against Socrates,<sup>c</sup> and which had led to the Athenians decreeing the hemlock for their noblest citizen. But this Athens was not the Athens of Socrates. Then there was still some belief in the gods. Now the age was more tolerant, because more sceptical.<sup>d</sup>

**Jesus and the Resurrection.** It is thought by some that they took the Resurrection (*Anastasis*) to be the name of a goddess. But Paul is not likely, in speaking of the Resurrection, to have expressed himself so strangely as to lead them to think that he was speaking of a person. What he had doubtless done was to set forth the claim of Jesus to be the Son of God, and His Resurrection as the attestation of that claim.<sup>e</sup>

The words are interesting on two grounds. They show, first, what was the main subject of Paul's preaching—not abstract doctrines, but

<sup>a</sup> Macduff, *Paul in Athens*, p. 40; Benson, p. 418; Huntington, p. 48.

<sup>b</sup> Hackett, *Acts*; Renan, *Paul*, p. 134.

<sup>c</sup> Xenophon, *Mem.* i. 1.

<sup>d</sup> Maurice, p. 284.

<sup>e</sup> W. Alexander, p. 19.

the personal history of One who was Divine<sup>a</sup>; secondly, that, though his spirit had been provoked by the sight of a city filled with idols, he had not inveighed against idolatry, but had set forth the positive truth of the Gospel.<sup>b</sup>

**19. took hold of him.** The common view is probably mistaken in two respects. First, there was no arrest or formal trial. The time had passed when a setter forth of strange gods was in any danger at Athens. Curiosity was (verse 21) the motive of the whole proceeding. A fancy seized them to call this Jewish stranger to a sort of mock trial for his new doctrine.<sup>c</sup> His speech is not of the nature of a defence and is followed by no verdict. His hearers, when they had heard enough, simply walked away.

Secondly, he was not taken to the Hill of Areopagus. The picture of Paul upon the hill, familiar to all from Raphael's cartoon, speaking in view of the glorious Acropolis, is so striking that it can be abandoned only with extreme regret. But it is without foundation. The connexion of the Council of Areopagus with the Hill was traditionary, or, at most, ceremonial. Its usual meeting-place was in the Stoa Basilica, opening on the Agora, and close to the scene where the discussion had arisen. The Hill would be inadequate in size and otherwise unsuitable; and the idea that Paul was taken thither is mainly due to the translation 'Mars Hill' in the Authorized Version of verse 22. But 'the Areopagus' was popularly used as a shortened form of 'the Council of Areopagus'.<sup>d</sup>

**21. Now all the Athenians.** This verse almost reproduces words of Demosthenes.<sup>e</sup> The frivolous character of the Athenians could scarcely have been summed up better. It looks as though Luke felt the dramatic contrast between the eager, burning Apostle and these idle triflers.<sup>f</sup>

## 22-31

<sup>22</sup> And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, Men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are specially Godfearing folk. <sup>23</sup> For as I went about and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, *To the Unknown God*. What,

<sup>a</sup> Row, p. 182.

<sup>b</sup> Iverach, p. 110.

<sup>c</sup> Fraser, p. 151.

<sup>d</sup> Johnston, p. 118; E. Curtius, *Expositor*, Nov. 1907.

<sup>e</sup> *Philipp.* i. 43.

<sup>f</sup> Davies, p. 133; Iverach, p. 108.

therefore, ye unknowingly worship, that set I forth to you. <sup>24</sup> The God who made the world and all things therein—he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made by hands ; <sup>25</sup> neither is served by human hands as needing anything further, seeing he himself giveth to all life and breath and all things : <sup>26</sup> and he made from one source every race of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, determining their appointed times and the boundaries of their homes ; <sup>27</sup> that they should seek God, if haply they might grope after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us : <sup>28</sup> for in him we live and feel and are : as also certain of your poets have said, For we are even his offspring. <sup>29</sup> Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like to gold and silver or stone, graven by art and device of man. <sup>30</sup> Having therefore overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent ; <sup>31</sup> inasmuch as he hath appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he hath ordained ; whom he hath accredited unto all by raising him from the dead.

No record of this speech is likely to have been preserved by any of those who heard it. But the lines of the address were probably the result of long thought ; and so Paul would be able to give Luke later an accurate summary of what he had said. When we mark the difference between this speech and those addressed to Jewish synagogues, we understand the providential ordering by which the Apostle to the Gentiles had received a Gentile, as well as a Jewish, training. Speaking to heathens he bases nothing on Jewish history, makes no reference to Jewish Scriptures, but appeals to the moral and religious consciousness of humanity. He tries to comprehend paganism and its history from the standpoint of the new revelation. And his conception of paganism is as original as it is profound. 'What ye unknowingly worship'—in polytheism thus understood he



finds a point of attachment for the worship of the true God. Instead of denouncing idolatry, he penetrates to the feeling which underlies it and to the necessity under which man must worship.<sup>a</sup>

Yet never did speaker labour under greater disadvantages. Paul was a foreigner, and the Athenians despised all foreigners as 'barbarians'. His ignorance of the laws of Greek rhetoric was against him: his speech, by his own confession (2 Cor. x. 10) rendered him contemptible in the eyes of the less fastidious Corinthians. His general appearance was against him; his 'bodily presence was weak', and his hearers belonged to the most perfectly developed race that the world has seen. His subject was against him; he stood there to denounce the religious usages of the Greeks in the very centre of Greek worship.<sup>b</sup>

**22. Men of Athens.** The words were those with which the great Demosthenes always began his speeches, and they would send a thrill through the hearts of his hearers, carrying them back in thought to the days of Athenian freedom and greatness.<sup>c</sup> But they meant more than this to Paul—'men'—they were men with immortal souls, capable of salvation. How should he deal with them? Was there one idea in common between himself and them which could serve as a link? Yes; he begins with that graceful tribute which our Authorized and Revised Versions agree to mar. His own eyes confirmed what so many travellers had said of them—that they were a Godfearing people. Here was a bond of common feeling; a slender bond, for their religion was to him the saddest feature of their life; yet even from their idolatrous altars he would get a text, if so he might win them for his Master.<sup>d</sup>

**Godfearing.** The translation 'superstitious' alters the keynote of the speech, which is wholly conciliatory. The Greek word involved, no doubt, the idea of fear—of that apprehensive presentiment of evil in connexion with religion which threw a dark shadow over the heathen mind. But Paul was not the man to begin by tilting at errors, and offending his audience in his first sentence. He meant by this word to commend their zeal in religion as zeal in a good cause. He was glad to find a whole city evincing interest in that subject which to himself was of paramount importance.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> F. B. Meyer, p. 122; J. Robertson, p. 213; Sabatier, p. 104; Eadie, p. 190.

<sup>b</sup> W. Alexander, p. 39.

<sup>c</sup> Shakspeare, p. 17; W. Alexander, p. 45.

<sup>d</sup> Huntington, p. 51.

<sup>e</sup> Farrar, i. 542; Huntington, p. 45; Barnes, *Paul*, p. 187.

**23. the Unknown God.** Pausanias mentions<sup>a</sup> the existence of altars at Athens to unknown gods. This one had probably been erected at a time of pestilence, or some other visitation, the source of which could not be identified. The inscription in no way proves that they had any conception of an unknown god exalted above other gods, but meant only that they feared that they had unwittingly offended some god and wished to propitiate him. To read into it the aspiration of a purer piety, casting into the void that homage which it could no longer pay to the gross divinities of paganism, is to be guilty of an anachronism. But Paul seized upon it as a text. If they meant only that, he would make it mean something more—an avowal of the inadequacy of paganism; a confession that their catalogue of gods did not include all the powers of the universe. There was a God not found in their list; unknown, as they admitted, to them. He could tell them about this unknown God, whom they virtually acknowledged; for the God to them unknown was to him the only real God.<sup>b</sup>

**24. who made the world.** God, so far from being really unknown, has revealed Himself in creation. And being the Maker of the universe, He cannot be limited to one spot in it. Temples are holy, not because God dwells in them, but because men set them apart for worship.<sup>c</sup>

**25. as needing anything.** From the false theory of temples he passes to the false theory of worship. God is not Receiver but Giver.

**26. from one source.** No Greek held this view. To him all other races were 'barbarians'. And the Jew was equally exclusive. He claimed to belong to a people marked off from all other nations. It shows the greatness of Paul that he, 'a Hebrew of Hebrews,' could see the providence of God shaping the destiny of the Gentiles as well as of Israel.

**determining their appointed times.** From creation he passes to providence. There, too, the Unknown has revealed Himself. God is in history. The separation of men into nations, each with its assigned territory and destiny, is not the outcome of chance or of blind fate.

**27. that they should.** In all the tangled web of history the Divine purpose is to lead men to seek God. He is drawing them to Himself through the whole course of human affairs.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Description of Greece*, i. 1, 4.

<sup>b</sup> Neander, p. 190; Bungener, p. 160; Fraser, p. 154; Eadie, p. 192.

<sup>c</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Maclaren, ii. 142.

**28. certain of your poets.** In two other places Paul quotes from classical authors—from Menander (1 Cor. xv. 32) and from Epimenides (Titus i. 12). But both these quotations may well have been current as proverbs, and are no proof of acquaintance with classical literature. This, however, is not true of the present quotation. The words are found in both Aratus and Cleanthes. The former was a Cilician, and therefore his poem, which was widely known, may have been familiar to Paul. But the plural looks as though he were aware that the words occurred in Cleanthes also; and his retention of the particle 'for', which belongs to the text of both Aratus and Cleanthes, shows that he is quoting, not a proverbial utterance, but a passage from their works. None the less this solitary instance must not be unduly pressed. A man may easily quote an isolated verse from a poet without having read his poems. And the scarcity of quotations from classical authors on the part of a man who could scarcely write a sentence without quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures is proof that Paul had not had a Greek education. Further, his Greek style shows no trace of classical influence; and his method of reasoning is that of a Jew by training as well as by birth.<sup>a</sup>

**29. the Godhead.** That we are the offspring of God ought to teach us that the Divine Essence cannot be imaged in stone or metal, since we cannot image ourselves in our essential nature. We can only produce an effigy of our external appearance: our living selves, our reason, our soul, defy material representation.<sup>b</sup>

**30. overlooked.** The parallel with Wisdom xi. 23—'Thou overlookedest the sins of men to the end they may repent'—is too close to be accidental. The resemblance of phraseology between the first chapter of 'Romans' and Wisdom clearly shows that Paul knew the latter book well. The parallel here is evidence that this speech and the Epistle to the Romans are productions of the same mind.<sup>c</sup>

**31. will judge.** Paul had just come from Thessalonica; and his letters to that Church written from Corinth show that his mind was at this time full of the expectation of the Return of Christ as Judge.<sup>d</sup>

**a man.** This avoidance of more distinctively Christian language is evidence of the authenticity of the speech. It was no time to unfold the mystery of Jesus' Divine nature.<sup>e</sup>

**whom.** 'Whereof' (A.V. and R.V.) is a wrong rendering.

<sup>a</sup> Godet, p. 71; Wrede, p. 3; Hausrath, iii. 10; Dewes, p. 1 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Eadie, p. 218.

<sup>c</sup> Chase, p. 221.

<sup>d</sup> Chase, p. 230.

<sup>e</sup> Chase, p. 232.

There is no connexion between the fact of Judgment by Christ and the fact of His Resurrection. What Paul says is that God, by raising Jesus from the dead, accredited Him as being all that He claimed to be.<sup>a</sup>

## 32-34

<sup>32</sup> Now when they heard of a resurrection of dead men, some mocked ; but others said, We will hear thee yet again on this matter. <sup>33</sup> Thus Paul departed from among them. <sup>34</sup> But certain men clave to him and believed ; among whom was also Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

**32. when they heard.** The assertion of the existence of one sole Creator was not an unheard-of thing to them : it was found in the speculations of their own philosophers. Nor were His spiritual nature and His paternal relation to His creatures truths of which faint visions had not been seen from time to time. Even to Paul's statement of a future Judgment they listened, though perhaps with amused toleration. But when he approached the distinctive doctrine of the Gospel—that this Judge would be a man whom God had recently raised from the dead—they did not care to hear more.<sup>b</sup> And, indeed, the unsupported assertion that a certain man had been raised from the dead was not likely to obtain credence from such an audience. There had not been sufficient contact with Judaism to touch the Greek belief that there was 'no resurrection for the man once dead'.<sup>c</sup> That the soul might live apart from the body their best men hoped and argued ; but matter they regarded as essentially impure. The body was a clog upon the nobler part of man. The idea of a risen body, a glorified body, no longer an encumbering weight but a worthy handmaid of the soul—this was altogether beyond their speculations. 'O grave, where is thy victory?' was a strain never dreamt of in their philosophy. 'A resurrection of dead men !'—so they contemptuously generalized from Paul's assertion of the resurrection of one man—Why should they listen further?<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> W. Alexander, p. 269.

<sup>b</sup> Davies, p. 147 ; Norris, p. 88.

<sup>c</sup> Æschylus, *Eum.* 647 ; J. Thomas, p. 101 ; W. J. Woodhouse, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 383.

<sup>d</sup> Gurney, p. 265.

**some mocked.** These philosophers were gentlemen : not like the rough Praetors of Philippi or the mob of Thessalonica. Their weapon was not force, but ridicule. And Paul found ridicule harder to bear than violence. Their cold disdain cut him more deeply than the stones of the mob or the lictors' rods. If they had beaten him, he would have been there on the morrow. He returned to cities where he had been persecuted. But to Athens, where he had been met with scorn or indifference, he never returned. It is a sad story—the noblest of ancient cities and the noblest man of history—and he never cared to look on it again ; never speaks of his work there, or mentions his converts ; never even alludes to the place, except in the incidental remark (1 Thess. iii. 1), 'I thought it good to be left at Athens alone.'<sup>a</sup>

**33. Thus Paul departed.** Luke makes no attempt to disguise the situation. It is clear that Paul felt that his speech had been a failure. Never had he tried more earnestly to adapt his teaching to his audience, and never had he been so unsuccessful. He had not even succeeded in stirring opposition or stimulating inquiry—they simply did not care what 'this charlatan' said. The Greeks 'sought after wisdom', and he had tried to impart wisdom, only to realize that 'the world by wisdom knew not God'. He set out for Corinth, determined, as he himself tells us, 'not to know anything there save Jesus Christ and him crucified'.<sup>b</sup>

Yet the failure may have been to the outward eye only. We need not accept as justified the reproach which in his soreness he cast upon himself. But the fact that he did believe that he had erred at Athens in trying to meet philosophy with philosophy is a strong confirmation of the truthfulness of Luke's account of his speech.<sup>c</sup>

**34. certain men.** A marked contrast to the 'great multitude' at Thessalonica (ver. 4) and the 'many' at Beroea (verse 12).<sup>d</sup>

**Dionysius.** Luke probably inserted these names on the basis of tradition. Paul himself (1 Cor. xvi. 15) calls the household of Stephanas 'the firstfruits of Achaia'—not, that is, of Corinth, but of the province which included Athens.<sup>e</sup>

**a woman.** Luke's interest in women, which is so marked in his Gospel, is seen also in the Acts. He specially notes the female converts made on this tour—Lydia at Philippi, 'the chief women' at

<sup>a</sup> Benson, p. 429 ; Stalker, p. 133 ; Parker, ii. 221.

<sup>b</sup> Maclaren, ii. 145 ; Johnston, p. 119.

<sup>c</sup> Bungener, p. 173 ; Chase, p. 234.

<sup>d</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>e</sup> McGiffert, pp. 259, 273 ; W. J. Woodhouse, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 33.



Thessalonica, 'Greek women of rank' at Beroea, and now, at Athens, Damaris.<sup>a</sup>

**Damaris.** She was probably the fruit of his more general work in the city. She may have been a Jewess, Tamar, whose name was thus Grecized. In Athenian society no woman of respectable position would have been present at this speech. If she was present, she must have belonged to the class of educated courtezans—another Magdalene, who cast herself in penitence at the foot of the Cross.<sup>b</sup>

## CHAPTER XVIII

### I-4

<sup>1</sup> After these things he departed from Athens and came to Corinth. <sup>2</sup> And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by birth, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome ; and he went to them. <sup>3</sup> And because he was of the same craft he abode with them, and they wrought ; for by their craft they were tentmakers. <sup>4</sup> And he discoursed in the synagogue every Sabbath, seeking to win over Jews and Greeks.

**I. Corinth.** The ancient city, which had played a part second only to Athens and Sparta in the history of the Greeks, had been taken and totally destroyed by Mummius two hundred years before this date. A century later it had been rebuilt by Julius Caesar and made a Roman colony. Considering its unrivalled situation, with a harbour on both east and west, it is not strange that it rapidly became again a great city. Still, it was not the old Corinth, but a European commercial town, with a populous Jewish settlement ; and, as the seat of the Roman Proconsul, it was almost as much Latin as Greek.

These considerations must have given Corinth unusual importance in the eyes of Paul. To establish a strong Church there would be to cast seeds upon waters that would bear them to all parts of the civilized world. Yet he tells us (1 Cor. ii. 3) that he arrived there

<sup>a</sup> Fraser, p. 163.

<sup>b</sup> Baring-Gould, p. 238 ; F. B. Meyer, p. 123 ; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 252 ; Macduff, *Paul in Athens*, p. 203.

'in weakness and in fear and in much trembling'. His dejection may have been due in part to illness: in part it was certainly due to anxiety about his Thessalonian converts; but the main cause was his ill success at Athens. Everywhere else the susceptibility of the Gentiles to his message had been his consolation under the sadness caused by the hardheartedness of his own countrymen. Was his failure at Athens about to be repeated at Corinth? This was the dread which haunted him. True, Corinth was very different from Athens, but the difference was itself an additional reason for discouragement. The most conspicuous object was not the Parthenon, dedicated to the goddess of wisdom, but the temple of Aphrodite, the centre of a worship which made a religion of impurity. To 'play the Corinthian' was a proverbial expression for a life of debauchery. Paul was there confronted not merely by polytheism, but by a degraded moral sense.

Yet strangely enough he found there what he had sought in vain among the philosophers of Athens, responsiveness to the truth. On intellectual Athens he had made no impression. In licentious Corinth he planted one of his most vigorous Churches.

2. **a certain Jew.** If he was already a Christian, he may have been converted at Pentecost where 'Jews from Pontus' were present (ii. 9). But since Luke calls him simply 'a Jew', without adding that he 'was' 'a disciple' or 'a believer', and assigns (ver. 3) a common trade, and not a common faith, as Paul's reason for joining him, he was probably not yet converted. He was, it is implied, a Jew by religion and a Pontian by birth; and the double bond of nationality and common occupation drew them together, both strangers in a great city. His subsequent conversion from daily contact with Paul in the workshop might easily pass unrecorded by Luke.<sup>a</sup>

**of Pontus.** Pontius Aquila is a name found more than once in the Pontian family,<sup>b</sup> so that the 'of Pontus' might be thought to be a mistaken inference on Luke's part from his name. But this man was 'a Jew'; and the fact that the Aquila who in the second century translated the Old Testament into Greek was a native of Pontus confirms Luke's statement. Moreover, Pontus was, like Cilicia, a district with abundant pasturage for goats and numbered tentmaking among its industries.<sup>c</sup>

**Priscilla.** One of the oldest Roman catacombs is the *Caemeterium*

<sup>a</sup> Lange, *Acts*; Iverach, p. 116.

<sup>b</sup> Cic. *ad Fam.* x. 33; Suet. *Caes.* 78.

<sup>c</sup> G. Milligan, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Aquila; Benson, p. 436.

*Priscillae*. The name *Prisca* has some connexion with the *Acilian* family, members of which are buried there. She may have belonged to that family, or to that of the *Prisci*, another noble clan; while her husband was probably, like many of the Jews at Rome, a freedman. This would account for the prominence given to her, and would explain why her name is elsewhere placed before his (ver. 18, 26; Rom. xvi. 3; 2 Tim. iv. 9).<sup>a</sup> Harnack suggests that they may be the writers of 'Hebrews', and that the anonymity is due to the fact that a woman was joint author.

Paul in his letters employs the more courteous and correct form of her name, *Prisca* (Rom. xvi. 3; 1 Cor. xvi. 19), just as he calls *Silas Silvanus* (2 Cor. i. 19; 1 Thess. i. 1), while Luke uses the familiar form of everyday life.<sup>b</sup>

**Claudius had commanded.** Suetonius says<sup>c</sup> that 'the Jews were expelled by Claudius for incessant riots under a ringleader, *Chrestus*'. There may, of course, have been at Rome a Jew named *Chrestus*, but it is more likely that the disturbances arose among the Jews 'about Christ'. The mistake would be explained by the common tendency to give a familiar form to foreign names. Thus Tertullian says that the Greeks and Romans both called Christ *Chrestos* ('the good man'). On the other hand, it should be said that Suetonius elsewhere<sup>d</sup> mentions the sect of 'the Christians'. Josephus, however, makes no mention of the decree; and Dio Cassius expressly says<sup>e</sup> that Claudius did not banish the Jews, since they were too numerous (they numbered over 20,000), but merely 'forbade them to hold the meetings enjoined by their laws'. Probably only a few who were implicated in the disturbances were expelled; and Luke himself states that some few years later Paul found Jews in Rome (xxviii. 17).<sup>f</sup>

Aquila and Priscilla would seem to have had their home at Ephesus, whither they went from Corinth (ver. 18), and where they were living some eight years later (2 Tim. iv. 19). Romans xvi (ver. 3) cannot be used to prove their return to Rome, since that chapter may be no part of the Epistle to the Romans (see on xx. 1). They furnish<sup>g</sup> a beautiful example in the Apostolic age of the power for good which may be exercised by a Christian husband and wife (ver. 26). They

<sup>a</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*; A. C. Headlam, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. *Prisca*.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Pictures*, p. 186.

<sup>c</sup> Claud. 25.

<sup>d</sup> Nero, 16.

<sup>e</sup> lx. 6.

<sup>f</sup> Renan, *Paul*, p. 92; Benson, p. 436; Hausrath, ii. 214.

<sup>g</sup> McGiffert, p. 428.

appear to have allowed their house to be used as a meeting-place for the Christians (1 Cor. xvi. 19; Rom. xvi. 5).

3. **he abode with them.** The domestic life and the society of a woman, apparently of refinement and strong character, must have been a great comfort and cheer to the homeless Apostle at this time of special depression. It is possible that the talks which he had with her and her husband about Rome may have suggested to him the great opening for missionary work in the capital and kindled his desire to visit it (xix. 21).

**tentmakers.** It is not likely that in other cities Paul worked among the slaves of a heathen employer. He would naturally prefer to rent a small workshop. And at Corinth he probably worked with Aquila, not as a labourer, but as a partner, as he appears to have worked with Philemon; cf. 'If thou countest me as a *partner*, receive him as myself. But if he have wronged thee at all or oweth thee aught, *put that to my account*' (Philem. 17). Aquila must have been a man of means, since his house at Ephesus was large enough for meetings (1 Cor. xvi. 19).<sup>a</sup>

It is thought by some that Paul's trade was that of a weaver of the goat's-hair cloth, working for a master who supplied the loom. But the word 'tentmaker' suggests rather one who made up the material, cutting out and stitching the tents. Tents were in constant demand in days when few, especially in the East, travelled without them.<sup>b</sup>

Paul had already worked for his support at Thessalonica (1 Thess. ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8), and Luke only mentions the fact here because it led to his acquaintance with Aquila and Priscilla. His craft was strangely suited to his circumstances, since it required few tools, was capable of being followed anywhere, and left mind and tongue free. But it was, as a consequence, poorly paid, and he had to 'labour night and day' (1 Thess. ii. 9) in order not to burden his converts.<sup>c</sup> Probably most of his evangelistic work was done, not by public preaching, but by personal contact, forming acquaintances as opportunity offered, labouring among those of his own trade, gradually gathering about himself a little circle which became the nucleus of a Church. 'Is not this the Carpenter?' men had asked of the world's Saviour: and of the world's greatest missionary they might have asked similarly, 'Is not this the tentmaker?' The fact that Luke almost

<sup>a</sup> E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, i. i. 259; Conybeare and Howson, i. 359.

<sup>b</sup> Godet, p. 69; Eadie, p. 245.

<sup>c</sup> Baumgarten, ii. 209; F. B. Meyer, p. 23; Hausrath, iii. 44.

necessarily lays the chief stress on his public activity must not blind us to the quiet methods by which the Gospel was ordinarily spread.<sup>a</sup>

But Paul's reason for thus labouring was not primarily evangelistic work, but the desire to give no handle to those who thronged the city, bent on purposes of trade, to allege that he was actuated by mercenary motives. No man should be able to say that he cared more for the fleece than for the flock. And his instinct was right; how right, we see when we note that he was accused later on of raising money out of the Corinthians for his own purposes, because he was so eager about the collection for the poor at Jerusalem (2 Cor. xiii. 16). Then he was able to remind them that, though the labourer was worthy of his hire, he had taken no hire from them.<sup>b</sup>

The fact that he alludes so often to having earned his living by working with his own hands is significant. To the ordinary artisan it would have been a matter of course. It is the man of culture who emphasizes it.

4. **he discoursed.** The next verse implies that, until the arrival of his companions, he confined his evangelistic work to speaking in the synagogue on the Sabbath. But he appears to have made some converts whom, in the absence of Timothy, he himself baptized (1 Cor. i. 14-16).

**in the synagogue.** An inscription for a door—'Synagogue of the Hebrews'—found at Corinth probably belongs to about the time of Paul's visit. The interest lies in the rude and uncouth lettering, which points to the low social position of those who worshipped there, many of whom would be among his converts.<sup>c</sup>

## 5-11

<sup>5</sup> But when Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul began to be constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. <sup>6</sup> But when they ranged themselves in opposition and reviled him, he shook out his raiment and said to them, Your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean: henceforth I will go to the Gentiles. <sup>7</sup> And he removed thence, and went into the house of a certain man named Titus

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 255; Eadie, p. 247.

<sup>b</sup> Haweis, p. 125.

<sup>c</sup> Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, p. 13.



Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house was hard by the synagogue. <sup>8</sup> But Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized. <sup>9</sup> And the Lord said to Paul at night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; <sup>10</sup> for I am with thee, and no man shall lay hand on thee to hurt thee; for I have many people in this city. <sup>11</sup> And he settled there for a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

**5. Silas and Timothy.** For their movements, see on xvii. 15.

**constrained.** The Greek word is the same as is used by our Lord (Luke xii. 50), 'I have a baptism to be baptized with: and how am I *straitened* till it be accomplished!' and by St. Paul (2 Cor. v. 14), 'The love of Christ *constraineth* us'. It brings out strikingly the Christian impulse which makes missionary work a necessity—the feeling that 'woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!' (1 Cor. ix. 16). It was with Paul as with Jeremiah of old, 'I am in derision daily: every one mocketh me. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay' (Jer. xx. 9). So it was with Paul. The fire was kindled, and the tongue must speak.<sup>a</sup>

The text evidently brings into relation, as cause and effect, the coming of his friends and the change in Paul. We learn from his letters (Phil. iv. 15; 2 Cor. xi. 9) that they brought a gift from the Church at Philippi; and this set him temporarily free from the necessity of working for his support. But they brought him something else (1 Thess. iii. 6) which was yet more gladdening—a good account of the steadfastness of his Thessalonian converts. He had been miserably anxious about them, and could not give his whole mind to the Corinthian work. Now a load was lifted from his heart, and at once the old impulse gripped him again.<sup>b</sup>

**6. shook out his raiment.** A significant gesture of rejection (Neh. v. 13).

**Your blood.** So he tells the Elders of Ephesus (xx. 26) that he

<sup>a</sup> Ramsden, ii. 76.

<sup>b</sup> Maclaren, ii. 150, 156; Gilbert, p. 131.

was 'pure from the blood of all men'. The words are a plain reference to Ezek. iii. 18, 19.

**henceforth.** While, that is, he was at Corinth (cf. xiii. 46).

A stormy period, lasting some time, seems to be compressed by Luke into one dramatic moment.<sup>a</sup> The expressions about the Jews in 1 Thess. (ii. 14-16) imply that Paul was suffering at their hands when he wrote the letter; and they show how deeply he felt their opposition and unrelenting persecution.

**7. went into the house.** Not as a lodging—he remained with Aquila and Priscilla—but as a meeting-place. For the first time, apparently, he established a place for separate Christian worship, as he did later at Ephesus (xix. 9).

**Titus Justus.** He was a proselyte—'one that worshipped God'—and so would be in a position to receive Jews and Gentiles indiscriminately under his roof.<sup>b</sup> Some MSS. have 'Titius', which may be right, since the less common name would easily be altered to the more familiar. In that case, he may have been one of the Titii, a famous family of potters at Corinth.<sup>c</sup>

**hard by.** This was not a conciliatory step, but the words and the actions of the last verse show that Paul was indignant with the Jews.<sup>d</sup>

**8. Crispus.** Paul himself baptized him (1 Cor. i. 14). This might imply that his conversion preceded the arrival of Timothy. But the order of the narrative does not favour this conclusion. He was a leading man among the Jews, and it is more likely that Paul desired to mark the conversion as one of exceptional importance.<sup>e</sup>

**many of the Corinthians.** The letters to Corinth imply a numerous company of believers. Paul speaks of four different factions (1 Cor. i. 12), and of several delegates (1 Cor. xvi. 3) to carry the contribution to Jerusalem.<sup>f</sup>

**9. And the Lord said.** This verse and the next, like the precisely similar passage in xxiii. 11, break into the context both in thought and form, and seem to have been inserted by Luke into the account which he had before him.<sup>g</sup>

**a vision.** These visions, which occur at other critical moments of his history (xxii. 18; xxiii. 11; xxvii. 23), seem to mark the reaction of Paul's indomitable faith in his periods of profoundest dejection.<sup>h</sup> It is clear that he was fearful and depressed, like other

<sup>a</sup> Hausrath, iii. 243.

<sup>b</sup> Conybeare and Howson, i. 373.

<sup>c</sup> Strabo, viii. 8; Hausrath, iii. 235.

<sup>d</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 256.

<sup>e</sup> Baumgarten, ii. 214.

<sup>f</sup> Gilbert, p. 132.

<sup>g</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, pp. 142, 207.

<sup>h</sup> Bacon, p. 171.

great souls in hours of reaction from strain ; like Elijah (1 Kings xix. 4), or Jeremiah (Jer. xv. 15 seq.). It was very natural. From the hour of his landing in Europe he had encountered little but danger and disappointment. Scourged and imprisoned at Philippi ; hounded by a mob out of Thessalonica ; forced to make a hasty escape from Beroea ; met with indifference or contempt at Athens ; he had entered a few weeks before on a new field. The opposition of the Jews made him apprehend a similar termination to his work at Corinth. If the second letter to the Thessalonians was written at this time, it shows the dangers that beset him. He asks (iii. 2) for their prayers that he may be 'delivered from unreasonable and evil men'.<sup>a</sup> Recalling his want of success at Athens, he had determined to have done with the arts of rhetoric and philosophy. No more would he use 'enticing words of man's wisdom' (1 Cor. ii. 4). He would know nothing now but 'Jesus Christ and him crucified'. But would the new method be more successful ? What was there in his message which could interest this gay and profligate people ? Fearful and despondent, he had, it would seem, been pondering whether he ought not to leave Corinth.

But this vision changed everything. At Athens, and up to this time at Corinth, he had been hoping to return to Macedonia—to the 'man of Macedon', to whom he had been specially called. Now he had received an equally definite call to remain where he was, and the assurance of the Divine assistance in a work which, because it was not his, but God's, could not fail.

**10. I am with thee.** The general promise to the Church (Matt. xxviii. 20) receives a personal application.<sup>b</sup>

**no man shall.** The promise was fulfilled. In no other Church, except Syrian Antioch, did the Christians meet with so little persecution.<sup>c</sup>

**many people.** It is the same Divine optimism which had seen in unpromising Samaria fields 'white already unto harvest' (John iv. 35). The Greek word for 'people' is that used to designate the chosen nation. 'The people' is no longer Abraham's seed according to the flesh, but a new Israel gathered from all kindreds and tongues.<sup>d</sup>

**11. he settled there.** We gather from the regulations laid down in his letter (1 Cor. vi and xi) that an unusual number of women

<sup>a</sup> Plumptre, *Acts* ; Maclaren, ii. 158 ; Pask, p. 241.

<sup>b</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> G. G. Findlay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Paul the Apostle.

<sup>d</sup> Arnot, p. 404.

were converted. Of the men some were of good social position, such as Erastus, the Treasurer of the city (Rom. xvi. 23); but the numerous slave-names (Tertius, Quartus, Fortunatus, Achaicus) show that the majority of his converts were from the industrial class. 'Wast thou called being a slave?' he asks (1 Cor. vii. 21). And he describes them (1 Cor. vi. 9-11) in a way which shows that he had gone to the lowest dens of iniquity in this city of slaves and sailors.<sup>a</sup>

**teaching the word.** That his teaching was not confined to the city is implied by his reference (2 Cor. xi. 10) to 'the regions of Achaia'. We hear also (Rom. xvi. 1) of a church at Cenchreae.

## 12-17

<sup>12</sup> But when Gallio was Proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, <sup>13</sup> saying, This man seeketh to persuade men to worship God contrary to the law. <sup>14</sup> And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, If it were a matter of civil wrong or criminal action, O ye Jews, it were reasonable that I should bear with you. <sup>15</sup> But if there be questions about words and names and your own law, ye will look to it yourselves: judge of these matters I am not minded to be. <sup>16</sup> And he drave them from the judgment seat. <sup>17</sup> And they all laid hold on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of these things.

12. Luke passes rapidly over the eighteen months, but relates an incident which shows the success of Paul's work. Elsewhere the Jews had stirred up the people against him. Here his influence was too strong to allow them to venture on this course, and they see what they can do through the Roman Governor.<sup>b</sup>

**Gallio.** His name has, owing to a misunderstanding of ver. 17, become a synonym for a cynical indifferentist. But the witness of secular history is wholly favourable to him, as a Roman noble of high character, wide culture, and singularly lovable disposition.<sup>c</sup> His

<sup>a</sup> Hausrath, iii. 244.

<sup>b</sup> Baumgarten, ii. 216.

<sup>c</sup> Johnston, p. 123.

brother Seneca wrote of him,<sup>a</sup> 'No other man is so dear to any single individual as Gallio is to all the world.'

**Proconsul.** Another proof of Luke's accuracy (see on xviii. 6). In B.C. 23 Achaia was made a Senatorial province under a Proconsul: in A.D. 15, owing to its financial embarrassment, it was changed by Tiberius to an Imperial province under a Procurator: in A.D. 44 it was restored by Claudius to the Senate. Thus at this time (*circa* A.D. 52) it is correctly described as being under a Proconsul.<sup>b</sup> Indirect evidence of the fact of Gallio's Proconsulship is furnished by Seneca's statement that he 'caught a fever in Achaia'.<sup>c</sup>

**brought him before the judgment seat.** Gallio's character for gentleness had doubtless gone before him to his province, and he was presumed to be weak and compliant.<sup>d</sup> At any rate, the Jews hoped something from the inexperience of a new Governor, who might also wish to do a popular act at the outset of his administration (cf. xxv. 2).

**13. contrary to the law.** Their argument was that, whereas Judaism was recognized as 'a lawful religion', Paul's religion was not Judaism. He, a Jew, was a disturber of the peaceful worship allowed by the Roman Government to the Jews.<sup>e</sup>

**14. when Paul.** They had reckoned without their host. Gallio refused to listen further to either party. The question they raised was beyond his province. As a secular magistrate, he would have nothing to do with it.<sup>f</sup>

**If it were a matter.** The contempt of the Roman for the Jew breathes in every word.<sup>g</sup> Men earn their title to immortality in various ways. Little did Gallio dream that he would live in history by reason of this one judicial sentence.

**15. names.** Whether, for instance, Jesus was to be called Christ or not.<sup>h</sup>

**your own law.** They had pretended (ver. 13) to be vindicating Roman law, but Gallio sees through the pretence. He was there to administer Roman law, and these Jews were for their own ends trying to obtain from him a decision on a dispute which lay outside his cognizance. He would not allow a religious question to be a subject of indictment in a civil court. He rightly understood the

<sup>a</sup> *Quaest. Nat.* iv. Praef. 11.

<sup>b</sup> W. J. Woodhouse, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 33.

<sup>c</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 258.

<sup>d</sup> Buss, p. 287.

<sup>e</sup> Johnston, p. 123; Davies, p. 172.

<sup>f</sup> Binney, p. 277.

<sup>g</sup> Farrar, i. 569.

<sup>h</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.



true functions of the civil magistrate; drew a clear distinction between opinion and conduct; and exempted the former from his jurisdiction.<sup>a</sup>

**16. drave them.** He ordered the lictors to clear the court. With their usual obstinacy, the Jews, who had not anticipated this summary dismissal of the case, remained before the tribunal, urging their complaint afresh.<sup>b</sup>

**17. they all.** When the Jews were forcibly ejected, the Greek mob, never friendly to them, was delighted to intervene.<sup>c</sup>

**Sosthenes.** He had doubtless been the spokesman of the Jews. If he succeeded Crispus (ver. 8) as ruler of the synagogue, his zeal may have been stimulated by the defection of his predecessor. If, as is more than likely, he is the Sosthenes coupled with Paul in the salutation of the First Epistle to Corinth (i. 1), he later became a convert and accompanied Paul in his work; and so two men, who had both been persecutors of the Church in times and places far apart, laboured together to build up that which they had sought to destroy.<sup>d</sup>

**cared for none of these things.** These words have been the text of many sermons, and the expression 'Gallio-like' used to denote the religious indifferentist. But they refer not to religious indifference on Gallio's part, but to his action as a Roman judge on a particular occasion. The mobbing of a foolish fanatic was a matter for the local police and not for the Proconsul of Achaia. What if a Jew got a beating? No doubt he richly deserved it. So long as there was no public disturbance, it would do these Jews no harm to get a caution not to take up the time of a busy official with their trumpery questions.<sup>e</sup>

Two results probably followed from this episode. (i) It strengthened Paul's position by assuring to him the protection of the law. The remainder of his residence in Corinth appears to have been safe from molestation.<sup>f</sup> (ii) It may have directed Paul's attention to the protection which the Roman Government might give him against the Jews, and have influenced him later in appealing to the Emperor.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*; Maclaren, ii. 165.

<sup>b</sup> Binney, p. 278.

<sup>c</sup> Hausrath, iii. 247.

<sup>d</sup> Farrar, i. 570; Thomas, *Acts*, p. 312; Kitto, p. 388.

<sup>e</sup> Eadie, p. 268; Johnston, p. 124; F. B. Meyer, p. 127.

<sup>f</sup> Davies, p. 173.

<sup>g</sup> Ramsay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Corinth.

<sup>18</sup> And Paul, having tarried yet many days, took his leave of the brethren and sailed away for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having polled his head in Cenchreae, for he had a vow. <sup>19</sup> And they came to Ephesus; and them he left there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. <sup>20</sup> But when they asked him to abide longer time, he consented not; <sup>21</sup> but, bidding them farewell, and saying, I will return again to you, if God will, he put to sea from Ephesus. <sup>22</sup> And having landed at Caesarea and gone up and saluted the Church, he went down to Antioch. <sup>23</sup> And after he had spent a certain time there, he departed, and went through the Galatian country and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

**18. took his leave.** Corinth was the first city on this tour where persecution had failed against him. So he stayed a long time and only left when he felt that his work there was for the time completed. The net result of the tour was the firm establishment of the Gospel in the two important provinces of Macedonia and Achaia.

**having polled.** The word may grammatically refer to Aquila, but since both the other participles in the verse refer to Paul, it is practically certain that this one also does. Luke would scarcely have thought it necessary to record that Aquila had taken a vow, but may have had reasons for recording that Paul did. The vow was not that of the Nazirite, since the cutting of the hair marked the termination, not the commencement, of the vow, and there is no proof, in spite of assertions to the contrary, that the Nazirite vow could be terminated elsewhere than at Jerusalem. The incident is obscure, but the fact that no explanation is given suggests that Luke considered that it was explained by the context. Hence the vow was probably connected with Paul's safe embarkation at Cenchreae. The interest of the matter lies in the proof which it furnishes that he did not in his own personal conduct depart from Jewish habits so widely as is sometimes represented.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Lange, *Acts*; Bungener, p. 193; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 263; Johnston, p. 125.

20. **they asked him to abide longer.** Such a request did not often come to him from Jews; but in this busy centre of commerce they were accustomed to encounter every variety of opinion.

**he consented not.** Ephesus had, no doubt, been his objective at the beginning of this tour, but he had then been forbidden to preach in Asia (xvi. 6). Yet now he would not stay, though pressed to do so. It looks as if he was anxious, before entering on a fresh campaign, to revisit Antioch and give a report of his work, as he had done (xiv. 27) at the end of his first tour.

21. **and saying.** The A. V. has a later insertion, 'I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem'—words suggested by xx. 16, and interpolated to account for the visit mentioned in the next verse.

22. **and gone up.** Serious difficulties are raised by this statement. Some have tried to get rid of them by understanding 'gone up' to mean 'from the shore to the town of Caesarea'. But even if this were possible, 'went down' could not possibly be said of a journey from a seaport to an inland town like Antioch. There can be no question but that Luke meant a visit to Jerusalem, though he evidently knew no details about it.<sup>a</sup> The improbability of such a visit is, however, very great. When Paul did go to Jerusalem three or four years later, he went in fear of the Jews, who were equally hostile now. Nor would he be likely to go there empty-handed, after his understanding with the Apostles (Gal. ii. 10). His own letters negative the idea. His last journey with the collection loses its historical significance, if he had been in Jerusalem at a comparatively recent date; whereas we see from Rom. xv. 26 that he regarded that visit as a momentous and decisive action. Indeed, the Acts itself negatives the idea by its subsequent statements. It implies (xxi. 25) that Paul had not been in Jerusalem since the Conference; and represents himself as saying (xxiv. 17) that it was 'many years' since he had been there.<sup>b</sup> Hence it would seem that the statement is due to an assumption on Luke's part that Paul would not have gone to Syria without saluting the Apostles.

23. **he departed.** This marks the beginning of the third missionary tour. In order to avoid repetition, and not to weaken the impression of continuous progress, Luke scarcely notices Paul's second visits to places. True to his plan of dwelling at length only

<sup>a</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 917; Cone, p. 153.

<sup>b</sup> Gilbert, p. 144; Weizsäcker, i. 249; ii. 11; McGiffert, p. 274.

on what was new, he supplies details relating to Ephesus alone.<sup>a</sup> Indeed, the complete absence of detail about Paul's movements between his departure from and his return to Ephesus suggests that Luke's authority for the events of this time was some one who had remained at Ephesus during Paul's absence, perhaps Aristarchus (xix. 29), who was afterwards Luke's fellow-traveller to Rome (xxvii. 2).

**the Galatian country and Phrygia.** The words are to be interpreted in the light of xvi. 6. Two districts are meant, both in the province of Galatia—Lycaonia (Derbe and Lystra) and Phrygia (Iconium and Pisidian Antioch).<sup>b</sup>

What period is covered by this verse it is impossible to say, but the work described would occupy a considerable time.

### 24-28

<sup>24</sup> Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. <sup>25</sup> This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus [knowing only the baptism of John], <sup>26</sup> and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him to them, and expounded to him the way of God more accurately. <sup>27</sup> And when he was minded to cross to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him: and when he was come, he through the grace given to him helped them much who had believed: <sup>28</sup> for he powerfully confuted the Jews, publicly proving by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

**24. Apollos.** This is the only instance in the latter half of the Book where the narrative parts company with Paul. Many have followed Luther in regarding Apollos as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The insertion of this episode shows that Luke was specially interested in him. Though his main subject was the

<sup>a</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. xxxiii; Stalker, p. 136.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Galatia.

passage of the Gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles, the conquest of the Jews by this gifted man was in his eyes so important that he gives him a prominence which he nowhere assigns to Silas or Timothy, though he knew them personally; and this is in harmony with what we learn about Apollos from St. Paul's first letter to Corinth (i. 12; iii. 5; iv. 6).<sup>a</sup>

25. **instructed in the way of the Lord.** It is not easy to say precisely what his religious knowledge was. These words, interpreted in the light of the clause 'knowing only the baptism of John', would mean that he knew of the prophecies about the Messiah and of the Baptist's call to repentance as a preparation for His coming (Isaiah xl. 3; Luke iii. 4); and 'teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus' would imply knowledge of John's declaration that Jesus was 'the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world' (John i. 29); in other words, he accepted Jesus as the Messiah, and was acquainted with the main facts of His life; but had little, or no, knowledge of His death and Resurrection and Ascension, or of the wonders of the Day of Pentecost and of the growth of the Christian Society. We seem, then, to have a combination of incompatible features. It is impossible not to wonder how, so many years after the Resurrection, one like Apollos, spiritually earnest and intellectually able, who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, could have been satisfied without further inquiry. The suggestion<sup>b</sup> that Apollos, like many Alexandrian Jews, may have lived in almost entire seclusion in some ascetic community would only partially remove the difficulty. That difficulty is entirely caused by the words 'knowing only the baptism of John', and they look very like an interpolation from the succeeding episode (xx. 1-7). For we are not told that Apollos was baptized afresh, as those disciples of John were; and they are introduced without any mention, apart from these words, of a disciple of John. If these words be omitted, all is clear. What was it that Apollos, who had been already 'instructed in the way of the Lord', and who 'taught accurately the things concerning Jesus', lacked? The incident in the next chapter seems to have been inserted with the express object of showing what was deficient in him. He knew nothing of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

**speaking and teaching.** That is, privately. It was not till he began to speak in the synagogue that Priscilla and Aquila came to know about him.

<sup>a</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 120.

<sup>b</sup> Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 108.



26. **they took him.** His case was probably only one of many in which they prepared the way for Paul's work on his return ; but Luke singles it out on account of Apollos' subsequent prominence.<sup>a</sup>

27. **the brethren.** The expression, which could scarcely be used of Priscilla and Aquila alone, implies that there was already the nucleus of a Church at Ephesus. But this is not the inference which would naturally be drawn from Luke's narrative ; and according to the Western text Apollos received an invitation to visit Corinth from some Corinthian disciples who happened to be at Ephesus.

**helped them much who had believed.** By confuting the Jews who had rejected Paul's teaching, he was of great assistance to the Christians in the controversies which were rife between them.<sup>b</sup>

28. **confuted the Jews.** Luke implies that Apollos laboured chiefly, if not solely, among the Jews. But the natural inference from 1 Cor. iii. 5 seq. is that he followed in Paul's steps and did not alter the predominantly Gentile character of the Corinthian Church. And this is inherently likely. Alexandria produced a school of thought in which the principles of Greek philosophy were applied to the Jewish Scriptures, and Apollos would be specially equipped for introducing the truths of the Gospel to the Greek mind. We know (1 Cor. i. 12) that the influence of his ability and eloquence was so great that a party among the Christians called themselves by his name, putting him, if not in opposition to Paul, at least on an equality with him.<sup>c</sup>

## CHAPTER XIX

### I-7

<sup>1</sup> And it came to pass, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, after passing through the inland country, came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples : <sup>2</sup> and he said to them, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye became believers ? And they said to him, Nay, we did not so much as hear that there is the Holy Spirit. <sup>3</sup> And he said, Into what, then, were ye baptized ? And they said, Into John's baptism. <sup>4</sup> And Paul said, John

<sup>a</sup> Howson, *Companions*, p. 255.

<sup>b</sup> Conybeare and Howson, ii. 9.

<sup>c</sup> McGiffert, p. 292 ; Cotterill, p. 390 ; Binney, p. 296.

baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on him who was coming after him, that is, on Jesus. <sup>5</sup> And when they heard, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began to speak with tongues and prophesy. <sup>7</sup> And the men were in all about twelve.

**1. passing through.** The Greek word always in the Acts implies missionary work (cf. especially xx. 25).<sup>a</sup> Hence it looks as though Paul were evangelizing as he travelled. That, however, can scarcely have been his reason for choosing this route in preference to the usual trade route through Colosse and Laodicea—cities which, he tells us (Col. ii. 1), he never visited. His motive for adopting the more direct, but less frequented, road through the Cayster valley must have been his anxiety to reach the great central city of Ephesus as quickly as possible.<sup>b</sup>

**Ephesus.** The capital of the Roman province of Asia and the residence of the Proconsul. Originally a Greek colony, it had become orientalized; and, though more Greek than Antioch, it was essentially an Eastern city. It was dominated by the worship of Artémis, and was the head-quarters of magical art.<sup>c</sup>

**certain disciples.** This is a puzzling incident; and, in the scantiness of the record, it is idle to discuss just what they did, or did not, know. If the words in xviii. 25—‘knowing only the baptism of John’—are genuine, it is natural to connect this incident with the foregoing narrative of Apollos, since much the same stage of development is presented. But if they were his disciples, how was it that they remained uninfluenced by the instruction which he received from Priscilla and Aquila? If those words are not genuine, the narrative presents less difficulty. Ephesus, like other cities which Paul visited, had received a special kind of preparation for the Gospel. Some account of the Baptist’s preaching, with his announcement of the Messiah’s coming, had been brought to the Ghetto, and a small band of penitents gathered together to help on the Advent

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Expositor*, v. i. 385.

<sup>b</sup> McGiffert, p. 275; Ramsay, *Churches*, p. 93.

<sup>c</sup> Farrar, ii. 10; Vaughan, iii. 83.

of the Day by prayer and fasting.<sup>a</sup> The ministry of John was so overshadowed by that of Jesus that its influence is easily underestimated. He stirred the Jewish nation to its depths. When Jesus began His ministry, John still continued his work (John iii. 22, 23); the disciples of each followed their own leader (John iii. 25; iv. 1); and those of John clung to him till his death (Luke vii. 19; Matt. xiv. 12). Many Jews from foreign countries must have received from him a knowledge of the Messiah and carried the knowledge to their homes. Their connexion with Judaea had ceased before the Day of Pentecost, and so they knew nothing of the mission of the Comforter: but the fact gives us a glimpse of the small publicity attained by the story of Jesus outside Palestine.<sup>b</sup>

One difficulty, however, still remains. It is not only strange that they should have been associating with the Christians and been accepted as 'disciples' with such imperfect knowledge, but that, being thus associated, their knowledge should have remained so defective.

2. **and he said.** The previous conversation is not recorded: only the result is given.

**Did ye receive.** Obviously he missed the marks of the Spirit in them. Something wanting in them suggested the question. The gospel of repentance did not give the joy which Paul's gospel brought. They were devout, rigorous, austere; but had not the radiant gladness which was so conspicuous a feature of the early Christians. 'The fruit of the Spirit is joy' (Gal. v. 23).<sup>c</sup>

3. **John's baptism.** This was a baptism to repentance and to belief in a Messiah who was immediately to appear. Paul showed them (ver. 4) that, if they were true disciples of the Baptist, they should accept the Gospel of Jesus, since He was the Messiah whose coming John had foretold.

7. **about twelve.** It is a strange episode. The men disappear from the history as suddenly as they enter it. It is clear<sup>d</sup> that they were not individual cases, but an ascetic community living together.

## 8-10

<sup>s</sup> And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, discoursing and seeking

<sup>a</sup> Maclaren, ii. 170; Stifler, p. 185; Barnes, p. 234; Hausrath, ii. 213.

<sup>b</sup> Stifler, p. 178; Conybeare and Howson, ii. 6; Maclaren, ii. 171.

<sup>c</sup> Parker, ii. 263; Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 109.

<sup>d</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

to persuade concerning the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup> But when some were growing hardened in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he broke off from them and separated the disciples, discoursing daily in the lecture-hall of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup> And this continued for the space of two years, so that all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

**8. three months.** Nowhere else did he preach for so long a time in the synagogue. On his former hurried visit he had awakened the interest of the Jews (xviii. 20), and they were probably eager at first to hear him. And it was only 'some' who opposed him.<sup>a</sup>

**9. separated the disciples.** He followed the course which he had adopted at Corinth (xviii. 7), and formed the disciples into a distinct body by themselves. The meetings for worship would naturally be in the house of some member of the community, and that of Aquila was one of those so used (1 Cor. xvi. 19). But it was further necessary to have some fixed place for those who were yet inquirers only, and this was found in the lecture-room of Tyrannus.<sup>b</sup>

**Tyrannus.** The name is found in inscriptions in the Columbarium of the Empress Livia as that of a physician attached to the Imperial court. If this man was his son (and identity of name, where the name is uncommon, points to the possibility of relationship), he may, since the calling was often hereditary, have been also a physician and have lectured at Ephesus on medicine. If, further, he was a friend of Luke, who would naturally be acquainted with leading members of his own profession, we can understand his willingness to oblige Luke's friend, Paul.<sup>c</sup>

The Bezan text adds the words 'from the fifth hour to the tenth'. The words may be genuine, since it is difficult to see why they should have been inserted. The fifth hour was the usual time for stopping business for the midday meal,<sup>d</sup> and Tyrannus would then vacate the hall, which would be at Paul's disposal till two hours before sunset.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Rackham, *Acts*; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 306.

<sup>c</sup> Plumptre, *Expositor*, I. iv. 144.

<sup>e</sup> Ramsay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Tyrannus.

<sup>b</sup> Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 111.

<sup>d</sup> Martial, iv. 8. 3.

**10. two years.** Paul says 'three years' (xx. 31). To the 'two years' must be added the 'three months' (ver. 8) and the 'for a while' (ver. 22).<sup>a</sup> At some point during his stay at Ephesus he appears to have paid a flying visit to Corinth (2 Cor. xii. 20, 21; xiii. 1). Communication between two such commercial cities was easy and constant. We know (1 Cor. xvi. 12) that Apollos had returned to Ephesus before Paul left it, and his report may have led Paul to revisit his converts. Soon after his return he learnt that his forbearance had been misunderstood, and he wrote a letter which has not been preserved (1 Cor. v. 9), unless 2 Cor. vi. 14-vii. 1 is a page from it which became attached to our second Epistle.<sup>b</sup>

**all they who dwelt in Asia.** Demetrius confirms this statement (ver. 26). The Seven Churches of 'Revelation' were all within easy reach of Ephesus, and may have been founded during this period by Paul's fellow-workers. It is implied in Col. iv. 13 that Epaphras founded communities which he placed under Paul's authority in Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. In 1 Cor. xvi. 19 Paul sends salutations from 'the Churches of Asia'. Further, his words to Titus (i. 5), 'For this cause left I thee in Crete,' most naturally suggest that he had been there; and if so, it was probably in the course of his stay at Ephesus.<sup>c</sup>

#### 11-20

<sup>11</sup> And God wrought no common works of power by the hands of Paul: <sup>12</sup> so that there were even carried to the sick handkerchiefs or aprons from his body, and the diseases departed from them and the evil spirits went out. <sup>13</sup> But certain also of the itinerant Jewish exorcists tried the plan of naming over them who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preacheth. <sup>14</sup> And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who were doing this. <sup>15</sup> And the evil spirit answered and said to them, Your Jesus I know and your Paul I understand; but who are ye? <sup>16</sup> And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them and mastered both of

<sup>a</sup> Page, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> L. Merivale, p. 258; Baring-Gould, p. 310.

<sup>c</sup> Gilbert, p. 147; Wrede, p. 62; C. H. Prichard, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Crete.



them and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house stripped and wounded. <sup>17</sup> And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who dwelt at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus began to be held in honour. <sup>18</sup> Many also of them that had believed came, confessing and declaring their dealings. <sup>19</sup> And a number of them that practised curious arts brought their books together, and burned them in the sight of all; and they reckoned up their value and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. <sup>20</sup> Thus by might of the Lord the word grew and prevailed.

**11. no common works.** Luke is careful to call attention to the unusual character of these miracles. Tyrannus may, if he was a physician, have been his informant. The phenomena described are just such as one physician would be likely to record, in writing to another.<sup>a</sup>

**12. handkerchiefs or aprons.** Our first impulse is to ask, How could God have worked in this materialistic way? Would it not give encouragement to superstition? But such questions ignore the place which in those days magic held in men's thoughts, especially in Ephesus. There, 'Ephesian letters'—pieces of parchment inscribed with the letters on the brow, girdle, and feet of the statue of Artemis—were worn as amulets against disease and danger. But the power of healing is a sacred power, which the impostor may claim, but which does not belong to him: and the Gospel confronted him at Ephesus with the true power, of which his was the counterfeit.<sup>b</sup> God teaches men by the means which will come home to them. Our Lord appealed to Galilean fishermen by miraculous draughts of fishes, by storms calmed at a word, by water turned to a crystal pavement beneath His feet. Though He sometimes healed without material vehicle, at other times He chose to anoint blind eyes with clay. He did not reject sense-bound faith, but helped it to become stronger and purer. The phenomena here described find parallels in the Gospel story. When the sick were healed by touching the hem of His garment (Matt. ix. 20, 21; xiv. 36), the same method of

<sup>a</sup> Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 116.

<sup>b</sup> Maurice, p. 309.

working was involved. It was not every one who had the faith which enabled the centurion of Capernaum (Luke vii. 7) or the woman of Tyre (Matt. xv. 28) to believe in the Lord's healing power without contact or material instrumentality. Among these Ephesians much superstition was doubtless mixed with the faith of those who received the handkerchiefs: but it was not to the superstition, but to the faith, that the reward of healing was given. It should, however, be noted that it is not said that Paul sanctioned such proceedings; and neither in his address to the elders (xx. 18 seq.) nor in his letter to the Ephesians does he allude to these miracles.<sup>a</sup>

The idea that a man's character and clothing are in some mysterious way identified, so that his garments can convey some efficacy, is widely found. It explains Elisha's action in taking up 'the mantle of Elijah that fell from him' (2 Kings ii. 13). Similarly Mohammed was besought to give his shirt to serve as a shroud for a dead man.<sup>b</sup>

**13. Jewish exorcists.** Luke in his Gospel (xi. 19) mentions such. The stern denunciations of sorcery in the Old Testament show the tendency of the Jews to such practices.<sup>c</sup> Instances are found in Tobit viii. 1-3, and Josephus, *Antiq.* viii. ii. 5.

**tried the plan.** Evidently they had seen miracles wrought by Paul in Jesus' name.<sup>d</sup>

**the Jesus whom Paul preacheth.** Success was thought to depend on the correct use of the prescribed formula. So, since Jesus was a common name, they, to avoid mistake, added the words 'whom Paul preacheth'. Christianity was, they thought, only a new form of magic: it seemed to work well in Paul's hands, and it might be worth while to incorporate it with other Ephesian mysteries. They failed, because they knew nothing of the Name which they invoked. To them it was a charm only—'Jesus, whom Paul preacheth', not 'Jesus in whom we believe'—and the Divine energy could not pass through such a non-conducting medium.<sup>e</sup>

**14. seven.** They may have pretended that there was a virtue in this mystical number. It shows the corrupt state among the Jews of Ephesus that these exorcists should be the sons of the leading priest.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Ramsden, ii. 110; Maclaren, ii. 175; Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 116; Iverach, p. 132; Farrar, ii. 23.

<sup>b</sup> O. C. Whitehouse, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Sorcery.

<sup>c</sup> Conybeare and Howson, ii. 15.

<sup>d</sup> Baumgarten, ii. 290.

<sup>e</sup> Morrison, p. 98; Parker, ii. 270 seq.; Ramsden, ii. 114.

<sup>f</sup> Ramsden, ii. 113.

**a Jewish chief priest.** Probably the chief Rabbi of the Ephesian synagogue.

**15. the evil spirit answered.** Speaking by the mouth of the possessed man.

**16. both.** The narrative is evidently abbreviated by Luke from a fuller account. The house is alluded to as though it had been mentioned before; and the fact that two only of the seven men were concerned in this attempt comes out incidentally in this word.<sup>a</sup> It should, however, be said that Moulton has found <sup>b</sup> examples in the papyri of the Greek word here used meaning, not 'both', but 'all'.

**17. this became known.** The sons of the leading priest would be well-known men in Ephesus. Both Jews and Greeks felt themselves in the presence of a power which they could not measure.<sup>c</sup>

**held in honour.** The city was convinced that the name of Jesus was not one to be lightly used or trifled with.<sup>d</sup>

**18. Many also.** This feeling was not confined to unbelievers. Many who had accepted the new faith had not before realized that it was incompatible with the practice of magic. It is hard for us to understand the extent to which such dealings entered into the affairs of daily life. Days for marriages or for journeys, engagements and business transactions, were often fixed only after an appeal to the soothsayer. It is not strange that converts to Christianity found it difficult to break from their old association with these practices. It was only by a severe struggle that the Gentile Christians converted from heathenism freed themselves from their corrupt antecedents. The stern and repeated warnings in Paul's letters show with what extreme forbearance the early converts had to be treated.<sup>e</sup>

**19. a number.** It is generally thought that these magicians also were believers, who, as soon as they realized that their trade was sinful, burnt their books, thereby not only putting themselves out of the way of temptation, but securing also that others should not in future be corrupted by them. It was probably this interpretation which led to the similar holocaust by the populace of Florence at the bidding of Savonarola.<sup>f</sup> But few of Paul's converts could have owned books of value. The more natural meaning of Luke's words is that these magicians were not Christians. In the fear that

<sup>a</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 207; A. C. Headlam, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. *Scēva*.

<sup>b</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 80.

<sup>c</sup> Iverach, p. 133.

<sup>d</sup> Stiffler, p. 192.

<sup>e</sup> F. B. Meyer, p. 136; Farrar, ii. 25.

<sup>f</sup> Barnes, p. 244; Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 119.

prevailed, they had not the courage to pursue their art longer. It might befall them as it had befallen the exorcists. And Luke records their action as a notable proof of 'the growth of the word.'<sup>a</sup>

**fifty thousand pieces of silver.** Ephesus was so largely Greek that it is practically certain that these coins were Attic drachmas of about the value of a French franc. Thus the amount would be about £2,000; but the purchasing power of this sum would be, of course, far greater than its nominal equivalent in English currency.<sup>b</sup>

## 21-22

<sup>21</sup> Now after these events Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. <sup>22</sup> And sending into Macedonia two of them that ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed for a while in Asia.

**21. Paul purposed.** This had not been his original plan. He had intended (2 Cor. i. 16-23) to go by sea to Corinth; thence by land to the Churches of Macedonia, which he had not seen for five years; thence by sea back to Corinth; thence by sea to Jerusalem. But the anxious reports of the state of the Corinthian Church led him to change his plans. He sent Titus to Corinth to regulate the disorders, and deferred his own visit.<sup>c</sup>

**to go to Jerusalem.** Carrying the contributions from the Gentile Churches (1 Cor. xvi. 1-3).

**I must also see Rome.** The Greek words form the latter part of an iambic verse. It may have been a proverbial utterance, expressing the magnetic attraction of the great centre of the civilized world, which was often on Paul's lips. It was 'must' also in the purpose of Providence, but he little knew yet in what capacity he was to travel to Rome. The mere formulation of such plans shows how far he had enlarged his view since he wrote to the Thessalonians of the Second Advent as a near event.<sup>d</sup>

Luke's statement that Paul's plan of visiting Rome was formed

<sup>a</sup> Hausrath, iii. 262; Stifler, p. 192.

<sup>b</sup> Buss, p. 260; Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 120.

<sup>c</sup> Farrar, ii. 32.

<sup>d</sup> Arnot, p. 430; Shirley, p. 75.

before he left Ephesus is confirmed by the letter to the Romans, where he speaks (i. 13; xv. 22, 23) of the design as having been in his mind 'for many years'.<sup>a</sup>

22. **sending into Macedonia.** The object was to secure that the contributions of the Churches should be in readiness.

**he himself stayed.** The reason is given in 1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9, 'I will tarry at Ephesus till Pentecost; for a great door and effectual is opened unto me.' Pentecost fell about the end of May, and that was the month of the annual Festival of Artemis, when business, worship, and pleasure combined to bring vast multitudes to Ephesus; and Paul felt that it would be a seed-time for the dissemination of the Gospel.<sup>b</sup>

## 23-41

<sup>23</sup> And at that time there arose no small commotion about the Way. <sup>24</sup> For a certain man, named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, provided no little employment for the craftsmen: <sup>25</sup> whom he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that out of this employment cometh our wealth: <sup>26</sup> and ye see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout Asia, this Paul hath by his persuasion turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made by hands. <sup>27</sup> And not only is there danger that this our trade come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be made of no account, and she should even be deposed from her magnificence, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. <sup>28</sup> And when they heard this, they were filled with wrath, and cried out, saying, Great Artemis of the Ephesians! <sup>29</sup> And the city was filled with the confusion; and they rushed with one accord into the theatre, haling with them Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel. <sup>30</sup> And when Paul was minded to enter in to the

<sup>a</sup> Gilbert, p. 157.

<sup>b</sup> L. Merivale, p. 270; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 321.



people, the disciples suffered him not: <sup>31</sup> and certain also of the Asiarchs, being his friends, sent to him and besought him not to adventure himself into the theatre. <sup>32</sup> So some kept crying one thing and some another; for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them knew not wherefore they were come together. <sup>33</sup> And they brought Alexander out of the crowd, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand and would have made defence to the people: <sup>34</sup> but when they recognized that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great Artemis of the Ephesians! <sup>35</sup> Howbeit the Recorder quieted the multitude, and said, Men of Ephesus, why, what man is there who knoweth not that the city of the Ephesians is temple-warden of the great Artemis and of the image which fell from the sky? <sup>36</sup> Seeing then that these things cannot be gainsaid, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rash. <sup>37</sup> For ye have brought hither these men, who are neither guilty of sacrilege nor blasphemers of our goddess. <sup>38</sup> If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen which are with him have a grievance against any man, there are appointed court days and there are proconsuls: let them join issue there. <sup>39</sup> But if ye seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. <sup>40</sup> For indeed we are in danger of being accused of riot in connexion with this day's gathering, there being no man whose proved guilt shall furnish us with an excuse for this concourse. <sup>41</sup> And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

23. at that time. The new teaching had, before this outbreak, roused fierce opposition. The words of 1 Cor. xv. 32, 'If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus,' were written before the riot and therefore cannot refer to it. They are not to be taken literally—the qualifying 'after the manner of men' means

'so to speak', and no Roman citizen could be thrown to beasts in the arena—but they show the dangerous temper of the populace, which Paul compares, according to a common Greek idea,<sup>a</sup> to a wild beast.<sup>b</sup> Demetrius now saw his opportunity in the presence of thousands of fanatical worshippers who thronged the city for the Festival.

24. **Demetrius.** It has been suggested by the Bishop of Lincoln<sup>c</sup> that this man may be the Demetrius whose name is found in an inscription (probably of about this date) as Head of the Neopoioi, or temple-wardens of Artemis: and that, if the source of this narrative described him as 'a silversmith and neopoios of Artemis', Luke may have mistaken the title of office for a further description of his trade, and understood 'neopoios' to mean 'maker of shrines'. And he points to the fact that no specimens of such silver shrines have been found. But it would follow from this theory that the riot was organized by the priests; whereas there is no evidence<sup>d</sup> that the priests were hostile to Paul (cf. ver. 37, 'nor blasphemers of our goddess'); and the theory therefore involves the assumption that Luke not only mistook the meaning of 'neopoios' but also misunderstood the whole situation, since he represents trade interests to have been affected. And to the argument that no silver shrines have been found, Professor Ramsay replies<sup>e</sup> that they would be melted down and so disappear.

**silver shrines.** Models for votaries to dedicate in the temple. The rich bought silver ones, the poor terra-cotta.<sup>f</sup> They were on sale throughout the year, but a special harvest would be reaped in May.

**Artemis.** The translation 'Diana' is most misleading, since she is not to be identified with the Greek Artemis, of which Diana was the Roman counterpart. She was an Oriental deity, a primitive personification of the powers of nature; a figure with many breasts, tapering downward to a point. The mystery of nature's fertility was a source of wonder to all early peoples, and corresponding forms of worship have been found almost everywhere.

25. **the workmen of like occupation.** That is, the makers of terra-cotta shrines. Demetrius summoned a meeting of the associated trades.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Plato, *Repub.* 493.

<sup>b</sup> Gilbert, p. 152; W. J. Woodhouse, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 1304.

<sup>c</sup> E. L. Hicks, *Expositor*, IV. i. 401.

<sup>d</sup> W. J. Woodhouse, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 1305.

<sup>e</sup> *Expositor*, IV. ii. 16.

<sup>f</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 278.

<sup>g</sup> Ramsay, *Churches*, p. 128.

**26. throughout Asia.** It is difficult to believe that converts to Christianity were so numerous as seriously to affect the sale of shrines. In comparison with the bulk of the population, the Christians must have been a small body. But since the majority of converts almost certainly came from the poorer classes, the trade may have been affected by the master-craftsmen losing some of their best workmen. And though there was doubtless exaggeration, the meeting would not have been called unless Paul's teaching had produced a perceptible effect; and men are quick to take alarm when their pockets are threatened. The speech is a good illustration of the way in which self-interest may masquerade as concern for lofty objects and yet betray itself.<sup>a</sup>

**this Paul.** A Jewish colony had long been in Ephesus, but its lifeless protest against idolatry had been harmless as compared with Paul's earnestness.

**27. the temple.** Its size and magnificence made it one of the wonders of the ancient world. And against the worship embodied in this glorious building one man, and he a poor tentmaker, was contending!

**even be deposed.** Self-interest tends to pervert the judgment. Yet it was a sound instinct which led Demetrius to see that Artemis was confronted by a Power before which she was doomed to fall.

**and the world.** This was scarcely an exaggeration. The cult of Artemis was carried far by Asiatic sailors and merchants, and her temples have been found in Spain and Gaul.<sup>b</sup>

**28. Great Artemis of the Ephesians!** This is the reading of the Bezan text, and inscriptions show that it was the formula of invocation, the usual cry of the votaries of the goddess at festivals. Professor Ramsay has pointed out<sup>c</sup> that the cry of the mob was not likely to be a controversial assertion; some familiar formula was sure to rise to their lips. And though he inclined later to retract his opinion<sup>d</sup> on the ground that the formula 'Great is Apollo!' has been found in an inscription at Dionysopolis, his earlier view is probably correct.

**29. the theatre.** The existing ruins show its enormous size, capable of holding some forty thousand persons. Though constructed for gladiatorial shows and dramatic performances, it was also the place for all large public gatherings.

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 131; J. Robertson, p. 253; Maclaren, ii. 182.

<sup>b</sup> Stokes, ii. 374.

<sup>c</sup> Churches, p. 135 seq.

<sup>d</sup> *Expositor*, iv. ii. 17.

**Gaius and Aristarchus.** If Rom. xvi. 4—‘who for my life laid down their own necks’—refers to this occasion, the mob appears to have gone in search of St. Paul to the house of Priscilla and Aquila, who endangered their own lives by some resistance. Foiled of their aim, the crowd seized two of Paul’s companions, just as the mob had done at Thessalonica (xvi. 6); but, as they were not Jews, no further outrage was offered them.<sup>a</sup>

The abrupt mention of their names is explained, if they were Luke’s authority for this chapter. Both were with him a few months later (xx. 4), and Aristarchus voyaged with him from Caesarea (xxvii. 2).<sup>b</sup>

**companions in travel.** Unless this description is an anticipation of xx. 4, it implies missionary activity on Paul’s part beyond the walls of Ephesus.<sup>c</sup>

30. This verse and the next interrupt the context, and appear to be an interpolation by Luke into his source.

**when Paul.** His distress, when he thought that his friends might be murdered while he escaped, may be imagined. None the less he showed splendid courage in wishing to face the mob, knowing that he himself was the real object of their fanatic rage. 2 Cor. i. 8 may refer to this occasion.

31. **Asiarchs.** These were not, as was formerly thought, specially associated with the worship of Artemis. They were, as is now known from inscriptions, connected with the recently introduced worship of the Emperor. In neighbouring provinces they were similarly called Bithyniarchs, Lyciarchs, &c. Originally there was but one Asiarch at a time for the province of Asia; but, as temples dedicated to the Caesar multiplied, their number was increased to ten. Their duties were to administer the funds for the ceremonial in the various towns, and to preside at festivals and games, even when the celebrations were connected with the worship of other deities, such as Artemis. Their expenses were considerable, so that only rich men could accept the office; but as it was a post of much dignity, it was eagerly sought.<sup>d</sup>

**being his friends.** This may be a gloss by Luke, since the Asiarchs probably did no more than order him not to leave the house, as they feared a riot. At the same time they were not likely to have much belief in the ceremonies, which they regarded as

<sup>a</sup> Binney, p. 309; Kitto, p. 406.

<sup>b</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 149.

<sup>c</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 280.

<sup>d</sup> Buss, p. 304; W. J. Woodhouse, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 341.

matters of state rather than of religion; and their sympathies were likely to be with an educated man like Paul, in danger from a mob of ignorant fanatics. It was an Asiarch who at Smyrna<sup>a</sup> resisted the cry of the populace to throw Polycarp to the lions.<sup>b</sup>

**32. kept crying.** Luke's description shows a characteristically Greek contempt for 'the mob', which shouts because others shout, and shouts what they shout without understanding it.

**33. Alexander.** It looks as if he had been previously mentioned in the source from which Luke drew. Probably he was the coppersmith' (2 Tim. iv. 14) who did Paul 'much evil'. The Jews were likely to deal in the copper and silver required for the shrines, so he may have had some trade connexion with the craftsmen which would give him influence.<sup>c</sup>

**the Jews.** Alexander was put forward to disclaim on behalf of the Jews, who were notorious for their hatred of idolatry, any connexion with the obnoxious Paul. The cry of 'Great Artemis' had roused the fanaticism of the mob; the demonstration was becoming anti-Jewish rather than anti-Christian, and they were afraid that their shops might be sacked or themselves murdered, as had happened not long before at Alexandria. So Alexander was put forward to divert the anger of the populace once more upon the Christians.

**34. but when they recognized.** The policy failed signally. The rioters recognized his Jewish features, and were in no mood to listen to fine distinctions between members of so hated a race.<sup>d</sup>

**35. the Recorder.** His office was one of far greater importance than is suggested by the 'Town clerk' of the A. V. and R. V. Ephesus was a 'free city', under its own laws: and though the Proconsul resided there, the Recorder was the chief magistrate, and his name appeared on the coins issued in his year of office.

**temple-warden.** Though the temple was at Ephesus, it was the common property of the towns of Asia, and its guardianship was the privilege of the Ephesians. The title is first found on Ephesian coins of Nero's reign.

**37. these men.** viz. Gaius and Aristarchus.

**guilty of sacrilege.** The Greek word occurs in Rom. ii 22, and is found in inscriptions discovered at Ephesus. According to the latter, the crime entailed severe penalties. Since heathen

<sup>a</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.* iv. 15. 27.

<sup>b</sup> Hausrath, iii. 263; Buss, p. 306.

<sup>c</sup> Hausrath, iii. 264; Plumptre, *Paul*, p. 105.

<sup>d</sup> Maclaren, ii. 186.



temples discharged some of the functions of a bank, vast treasures were often deposited in them.

**nor blasphemers.** Clearly Paul had with his usual tact been careful not to trample on the prejudices of the heathen, or insult what they held sacred, but had sought to undermine idolatry by preaching Christ. Perhaps, as at Athens, he had taken their reverence for Artemis as a finger-post pointing to something higher and purer than itself.<sup>a</sup>

**38. there are proconsuls.** A generalizing plural. It has been suggested<sup>b</sup> that since Junius Silanus, Proconsul of Asia, had in A.D. 54 been poisoned, at the instigation of Agrippina, mother of Nero, by the two Procurators, Celer and Helius, they may have been rewarded for their crime by being allowed to act as joint Proconsuls. But the conjecture is an impossible one.<sup>c</sup> No precedent can be found for so unusual a method of filling a vacancy caused by death; and neither Celer nor Helius were of rank to serve as Proconsuls.

**40. we are in danger.** Rome granted to the 'free cities' considerable liberty, but she was very jealous of any turbulent proceedings; and this disturbance might cost Ephesus a curtailment of her privileges.<sup>d</sup>

**ST. PAUL AT EPHESUS.** We have no letters of Paul to supplement our knowledge of his work at Ephesus; and the vividness with which the Epistles to the Thessalonians and to the Corinthians depict those Churches makes the meagreness of our information about Ephesus more felt. The so-called 'Epistle to the Ephesians' has the vagueness and absence of personal details which we associate with a circular letter. It can scarcely have been written to a Church in which he had laboured for nearly three years; and there is little doubt that it was addressed to Laodicea and the Churches of Asia generally.

On the other hand there are grounds for thinking that the sixteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans has been wrongly attached to that letter, and is really a 'letter of commendation', complete in itself, introducing Phoebe to the Church at Ephesus. For (i) it would be strange if greetings to more than twenty-five personal friends—a larger number than are mentioned in all Paul's other letters combined—were sent to a Church which he had never visited. (ii) Among those to whom he sends greeting are Epaenetus,

<sup>a</sup> Arnot, p. 434; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 325.

<sup>c</sup> Ramsay, *Expositor*, vi. ii. 335.

<sup>b</sup> Farrar, ii. 41.

<sup>d</sup> Stiffler, p. 197.

'the first-fruits of Asia', and 'my fellow workers' Prisca and Aquila, who had worked with him at Ephesus. (iii) Those who join him in sending greetings are Timothy and Erastus, who had both been with him at Ephesus. (iv) A comparison of 1 Cor. xvi. 19 ('Aquila and Prisca salute you much in the Lord, with the Church that is in their house') with Rom. xvi. 3, 4 ('Salute Prisca and Aquila . . . and the Church that is in their house') implies Ephesus as the continued residence of Prisca and Aquila. Otherwise we have to suppose not only that they had suddenly changed their home from Ephesus to Rome, but that they had again made their house a meeting-place for the Christians. And since in 2 Tim. iv. 19 (which letter, if genuine, was written by Paul to Ephesus during his imprisonment at Rome) he writes 'Salute Prisca and Aquila', we have to suppose that they had again returned from Rome to Ephesus. (v) Rom. xvi. 17-20 implies a pastoral solicitude and authority which are natural enough if addressed to Ephesus where he had worked so long, but are strange if addressed to a Church which was not his own and which he had never visited. (vi) There are numerous salutations to slaves in Rom. xvi. It is not easy to understand how Paul could have friends among whole households of slaves at Rome, where he had never been. (vii) The Epistle to the Romans ends very naturally with the fifteenth chapter and the word 'Amen'. (viii) This letter of commendation might easily have become attached to the letter to Rome, since both were written from Corinth and may have been copied by the same amanuensis.<sup>a</sup>

But if Rom. xvi. was addressed to Ephesus, we get an interesting light thrown upon Paul's work there. The salutations to slaves—'the household of Narcissus' and 'the household of Aristobulus'—and the numerous slave names, show that his converts were largely from the lowest social strata. The same fact is implied in Acts xix. 12. We are carried to the work-rooms of slaves by the story of the aprons taken to be laid on the sick and afflicted.<sup>b</sup>

It is sad to note the indications that the Church at Ephesus, where Paul laboured for a longer period than anywhere else, soon passed under other influences and away from him. In his address to the Elders he betrays (xx. 29, 30) his foreboding of a great defection. In Rom. xvi. 17 seq. (if it be addressed to Ephesus) he warns them against those who were causing divisions. In 2 Tim.

<sup>a</sup> Cone, p. 128; McGiffert, p. 275 seq.; Weizsäcker, i. 382; J. Thomas, p. 251.

<sup>b</sup> Hausrath, iii. 261.

i. 15 we find, 'This thou knowest, that all that are in Asia turned away from me.' And the Apocalypse claims the allegiance of the Ephesian Church for John, without any reference to its past under Paul.<sup>a</sup>

## CHAPTER XX

## I-5'

<sup>1</sup> And after the uproar had ceased, Paul, having sent for the disciples and encouraged them, took leave of them and departed for Macedonia. <sup>2</sup> And when he had gone through those parts and had given them much exhortation, he went into Greece. <sup>3</sup> And when after a stay of three months a plot was laid against him by the Jews, as he was about to put to sea for Syria, he determined to return through Macedonia. <sup>4</sup> And there accompanied him to Asia Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, of Beroea; and of the Thessalonians Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia Tychicus and Trophimus: <sup>5</sup> but these had gone before and were waiting for us at Troas.

**1. departed for Macedonia.** The history of several eventful months is here condensed into two verses. Happily the second letter to the Corinthians supplies many details. We learn from it (i. 5 seq.) that Paul left Ephesus in deep dejection. For the first time, so far as we know, he found his burden too heavy and confessed that his strength was gone.<sup>b</sup> He had himself narrowly escaped death; serious dangers still threatened him; but worse than any peril was the sickening anxiety to learn how the Corinthians had taken his stern words of reproof. He was haunted by the fear that he might have imperilled all his influence with his converts and driven them into defiance. Titus was to have met him at Troas with tidings of them; and his failure to arrive confirmed Paul's worst apprehensions. He had gone to Troas 'for the gospel of Christ' (2 Cor. ii. 12)—intending, that is, to do evangelizing work in that important city,

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 289; Weizsäcker, i. 378.

<sup>b</sup> Renan, *Paul*, p. 254.

from which he had, on his previous visit, been called away by the summons to Macedonia (xvi. 10). But though he seems to have done some preaching there, since he found an eager congregation awaiting him on his return a few months later (see, however, on ver. 7), he could not wait long in his impatience for news, but pressed on to Macedonia, doubtless to Philippi. There at last Titus met him with a report which greatly relieved him, and was again dispatched to Corinth with a letter (our 2 Corinthians).<sup>a</sup>

**2. gone through those parts.** It is impossible to say how long this journey lasted. It has been inferred from Rom. xv. 19 that Paul at this time preached as far as Illyricum; but that is a mistake (see on xvii. 15). His present object was not fresh mission work, but the confirmation of the Macedonian Churches and the collection of the contributions for the poor Christians at Jerusalem. And Luke, by mentioning that he stayed three months in Greece, implies that his time was spent chiefly there.

**3. a stay of three months.** They were undoubtedly passed in Corinth. No incidents were apparently known to Luke, but Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans in the course of it, and the plot of the Jews shows that his influence was widely felt.

**a plot.** His inveterate enemies had not forgotten or forgiven their defeat in the court of Gallio. This time they meant to trust to themselves. They learnt his intention of sailing in a ship carrying pilgrims to Jerusalem for the Passover; and with such fanatics on board it would be easy to find an opportunity of murdering him. No doubt they also knew the object of his journey, and their hatred was yet further inflamed by the thought of the Christians at Jerusalem receiving so splendid a testimony of the gratitude of the Gentile Churches.<sup>b</sup>

And Paul must have been painfully conscious of the perils which beset him. If the enmity of the Jews so far from Jerusalem was thus unrelenting, what might he not have to encounter there! In the letter just written to the Romans he beseeches them (xv. 30) to remember him before God that he might 'be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea'. And he felt also the danger that a gift from him might not be welcomed even by the Church at Jerusalem. In the following verse he asks for their prayers that his 'ministration at Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints'.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> F. B. Meyer, p. 141; Purves, p. 225.

<sup>b</sup> Baring-Gould, p. 367; J. Robertson, p. 266.

<sup>c</sup> Macduff, *Paul*, p. 287; Simcox, p. 102.

4. **there accompanied him.** In his previous journeys Paul's companions have been mentioned, but never before in such numbers. This unusual enumeration and the mention of the Churches to which they belonged—with the exception of the well-known Timothy, who perhaps was not a delegate (see on ver. 38)—show that they were travelling in some official capacity. Together they represent the larger part of Paul's missionary field. The explanation is found in xxiv. 17, 'I came to bring alms to my nation,' and also in Rom. xv. 25, written from Corinth. Paul had not forgotten the compact made at the time of the conference, that he would 'remember the poor' (Gal. ii. 10). It is a proof of his greatness that, after having been for years harassed and crippled in his work by Jewish Christians sent from Jerusalem, he never abandoned his purpose of a collection, but carried it out, not as a contract, but as a privilege.<sup>a</sup> This is the more striking, because he keenly felt his liability to be misrepresented when he asked his poor converts for contributions. It was not enough that he should not be accused of using the fund for his own maintenance: it was indispensable that he should not even be suspected; and so he never himself touched the money that was collected. Indeed, when he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, he was doubtful (xvi. 4) whether he would himself go with it to Jerusalem. But when he wrote to the Romans (xv. 25) he had made up his mind to go. His conception of the purpose which the collection might serve had enlarged. It might be made something more than an expression of Christian charity, more than a proof of his own loyalty to his promise, more even than a recognition on the part of the Gentile Christians of their obligation to the Jews, 'whose debtors they were' (Rom. xv. 27). It was an evidence to the Jewish Church of the reality of Gentile Christianity.<sup>b</sup> How could he prove that reality better than by bringing before them living representatives of what the Divine grace had accomplished?—men from among the Gentiles in each of the four provinces in which he had preached the Gospel, all showing the power of the new life? His recently written letter to the Romans shows (x. 19; xi. 14, 25, 26) that he believed that a universal conversion of his own nation would take place as soon as 'the fulness of the Gentiles' should be accomplished; and he wished to represent to Israel in the most vivid manner possible the great fact of the turning of the heathen to God.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Rendall, *Expositor*, vi. viii. 204; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 287; Cone, p. 134.

<sup>b</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 345; McGiffert, p. 338; Lock, p. 51.

<sup>c</sup> Baumgarten, ii. 315 seq.



There are several indications that the collection was a large one. It came from all the Gentile Churches; it had been gathered through two years (2 Cor. viii. 10); the Churches of Macedonia had given 'beyond their power' (2 Cor. viii. 3).<sup>a</sup>

It is strange that, while representatives of the Churches of Macedonia, Galatia, and Asia are mentioned, no deputy from Achaia is named, though Paul's letters show that the Church of Corinth was a contributor. Possibly Luke was their delegate, he being 'the brother whose praise is in the Gospel' (2 Cor. viii. 18). Though we know of no connexion between him and the Corinthian Church, the 'us' of ver. 5 may imply that he rejoined Paul there and not at Philippi; and the suppression of his own name and the indication of his presence only by the pronoun would suit his characteristic modesty.<sup>b</sup>

**Sopater.** As his name stands first, though Beroea was not among the more important Churches, he was probably head of the deputation; and he, not Luke, may be 'the brother, whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the Churches'.<sup>c</sup> The unusual addition of his father's name may be only to distinguish him from the Sosipater of Rom. xvi. 21, but it may show that he was a man of social position.

**of Derbe.** The mention of a delegate from Derbe is interesting. The later history of the struggle with the Judaizers in Galatia is unknown, but the fact that the province contributed to the collection shows that the victory lay with Paul.<sup>d</sup>

5. **these had gone before.** When the plot of the Jews obliged Paul to change his plans at the last moment and go by land, the rest of the party had gone, as originally arranged, by sea to Troas.

## 6-12

<sup>6</sup> And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and within five days came to them at Troas, where we stayed seven days. <sup>7</sup> And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul was discoursing with them, being about to depart on the morrow; and he prolonged his speech till midnight. <sup>8</sup> And there were many lamps in

<sup>a</sup> Gilbert, p. 159.

<sup>c</sup> Rendall, *Expositor*, III. viii. 204.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 289.

<sup>d</sup> Weizsäcker, i. 266.

the upper chamber where we were gathered together. <sup>9</sup> And there sat in the window a certain young man named Eutychus, who was gradually overcome by heavy drowsiness; and as Paul discoursed yet longer, he was borne down by his sleep, and falling from the third story was taken up dead. <sup>10</sup> But Paul went down and fell on him, and embracing him said, Make ye no ado, for his life is in him. <sup>11</sup> And when he had gone up, and had broken the bread and eaten, and had talked with them a long while, even till break of day, he departed. <sup>12</sup> And they brought back the lad alive, and were not a little comforted.

6. **we.** With the presence of Luke the narrative at once becomes more detailed, in strong contrast to the meagre summary of preceding occurrences. The second letter to the Corinthians shows that Paul had been for some time suffering from bodily infirmities. This may have led Luke to join him there, and determined him to accompany him in all his future travels.<sup>a</sup>

**after the days of unleavened bread.** This reckoning by the Jewish calendar marks Luke as having been a proselyte. (Cf. xxvii. 9.)

**five days.** Either there was a calm or a contrary wind, since with a favouring wind Paul had performed the reverse voyage in two days (xvi. 11, 12).

**stayed seven days.** His first visit had been cut short by the call to Macedonia. At his second he was too depressed by the delay in meeting Titus to avail himself to any extent of the open door which he found there. Now, having a few days to spare, he gladly made use of them.<sup>b</sup>

7. **upon the first day of the week.** The substitution of the first day for the seventh naturally began in Gentile Churches, which had never been bound to the observance of the Sabbath. But though it is a probable inference from this passage that the first day had already been set apart for public worship, the proof is not decisive, since the gathering may have taken place on that day solely because it was the eve of Paul's departure. Nor are Paul's words in

<sup>a</sup> Plumptre, *Expositor*, i. iv. 144.

<sup>b</sup> J. Robertson, p. 267.

1 Cor. xvi. 2—‘Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store,’—conclusive of the observance of Sunday, since ‘by him’ means in the Greek ‘in his own house’, and does not suggest a gathering for public worship; and as the converts were mostly poor people and slaves, it may mean that the first day was pay day, and so the day on which they could most easily lay by something. None the less there would seem to be no reason for mentioning here the day of the week, unless it had some special significance.<sup>a</sup>

**we.** This, and not ‘the disciples’ (A. V.), is the right reading. Hence it is not certain that there was a definite Church already in existence at Troas. The gathering may have consisted of Paul’s company with a few other believers. There is no mention of any leave-taking in ver. 11, such as is recorded in ver. 26 and xxi. 6.<sup>b</sup>

**on the morrow.** If the first day was being observed, it would probably be reckoned, on the analogy of the Jewish Sabbath, as beginning at sunset on the Saturday; and Paul started on his twenty-mile walk on the Sunday morning. Thus he did not transfer to the new Lord’s Day the restrictions of the Sabbath on travel.<sup>c</sup>

**till midnight.** A detail which betokens the eyewitness, as does the ‘till break of day’ of ver. 11.

**8. many lamps.** Three weeks had elapsed since the Paschal full moon, and the night would be dark.<sup>d</sup>

**9. sat in the window.** The ‘many lamps’ made it necessary to open the lattice shutter for ventilation, and Eutychus, who was sitting on the sill, fell, like Ahaziah (2 Kings i. 2), out into the courtyard.

**Eutychus.** A common slave name. He was perhaps an uneducated lad, little able to follow the discourse.

**was taken up dead.** This appears to be a plain statement that the lad was dead, and Luke was a physician. If he had meant ‘taken up for dead’, that could easily be expressed in Greek. And the embracing the body is not the act of a person investigating a case of apparent death, but is evidently intended to recall the miracles of Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 21) and Elisha (2 Kings iv. 34).<sup>e</sup> But Paul did not pray, as Peter did in the case of Dorcas (ix. 40); his words, ‘his life is in him,’ imply a swoon rather than death; the

<sup>a</sup> G. A. Deissmann, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 2813; Lechler, i. 137.

<sup>b</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 29.

<sup>d</sup> Conybeare and Howson, ii. 227.

<sup>c</sup> Hackett, *Acts*; Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>e</sup> Zeller, ii. 62.

lad did not arise at once, as might have been expected in the case of a miracle—it was not till the morning that his friends brought him back alive; and the language of ver. 12 does not indicate the great sensation which would have been caused by a resurrection from death. It is possible that Luke had already started with the others (ver. 13), when the accident happened, and was not himself an eye-witness.<sup>a</sup>

**11. till break of day.** An interesting illustration of Paul's energy and zeal. He discoursed throughout the night, though he had a twenty-mile walk before him.<sup>b</sup>

**he departed.** Leaving behind with Carpus (2 Tim. iv. 13) the warm cloak which he later missed in the chill of a Roman dungeon.<sup>c</sup>

## 13-16

<sup>13</sup> But we, going before to the ship, put to sea for Assos, there intending to take in Paul; for so had he appointed, intending himself to go by land. <sup>14</sup> And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board, and came to Mitylene. <sup>15</sup> And sailing away thence we came the following day over against Chios; and the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after we came to Miletus. <sup>16</sup> For Paul had determined to sail past Ephesus, that he might not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hastening, if it were possible, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

**13. the ship.** The party had apparently chartered a coasting vessel from Troas to Patara; and this explains Paul's ability to decide (ver. 16) where they should, or should not, touch. He may still have been afraid of plots on the part of the Jews, and therefore avoided vessels which sailed direct, taking pilgrims to Jerusalem for Pentecost.<sup>d</sup>

**intending himself to go by land.** He may have wished that the disciples should have a few more hours of his instruction by accompanying him.<sup>e</sup> But it is more likely that he wanted to be alone for a while. We generally have him brought before us amid

<sup>a</sup> J. Robertson, p. 268; Gilbert, p. 170; Bungenier, p. 291; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 291.

<sup>b</sup> Johnston, p. 139.

<sup>c</sup> Macduff, *Paul*, p. 299.

<sup>d</sup> Rackham, *Acts*; Pask, p. 292; Hausrath, iv. 107.

<sup>e</sup> Olshausen, p. 591.

the bustle of cities or disputes in the synagogues. And in so busy a life his spirit must often have longed for solitude. As Jesus sought His Father on the hill-top in the silent watches of the night (Matt. xiv. 23), Paul may have welcomed this opportunity of quiet communion with the God of nature.<sup>a</sup>

16. **had determined to sail past Ephesus.** Not because he did not love Ephesus, but because he loved it too dearly to go there for so brief a stay as alone was now possible.<sup>b</sup>

**the day of Pentecost.** He says (xxiv. 11) that he went to Jerusalem 'to worship'. His object was to cement union between the Gentile and the Jewish branches of the Church; and it was important to show his respect for one of the great feasts. He may also have felt that, since the festival would bring a large number of foreign Jews to Jerusalem, the presentation of his collection at such a time would publish the happy relations between the Gentile Christians and their brethren.<sup>c</sup>

### 17-35

<sup>17</sup> But from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the Elders of the Church. <sup>18</sup> And when they were come to him, he said to them, Ye need not to be told what manner of life I led with you all the time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, <sup>19</sup> serving as the Lord's bondman with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews:—<sup>20</sup> that I kept back nothing that was profitable, but declared it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, <sup>21</sup> testifying to both Jews and Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; <sup>23</sup> save that the Holy Spirit testifieth to me in city after city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. <sup>24</sup> But I hold not my life of any account as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my race

<sup>a</sup> J. Robertson, p. 269; Macduff, *Paul*, p. 290.

<sup>b</sup> Arnot, p. 441.

<sup>c</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 296; McGiffert, p. 339.



and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the glad tidings of the grace of God. <sup>25</sup> And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no longer. <sup>26</sup> Wherefore I protest to you this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. <sup>27</sup> For I shrank not from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. <sup>28</sup> Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit hath set you as overseers to shepherd the Church of God, which he purchased for himself through his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock: <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> Wherefore watch, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears. <sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you your inheritance among all them that have been sanctified. <sup>33</sup> I coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. <sup>34</sup> Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to them that were with me. <sup>35</sup> In all things I gave you an example, that so labouring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

18. **he said to them.** This speech is the only one in the Acts which it is practically certain that Luke himself heard; and it arrests attention by many marks of individuality.<sup>a</sup> It is even possible that he may have taken it down in a sort of shorthand, since Galen mentions that his lectures were taken down by his medical students; and Luke, as a physician, may have acquired the art.<sup>b</sup> At any rate, of all the speeches in the Acts this contains most

<sup>a</sup> Ropes, p. 76.

<sup>b</sup> Chase, p. 112.

of Paul and least of Luke.<sup>a</sup> It contains not only many peculiar Pauline words and phrases, but much Pauline mannerism. The same interruption to the flow of thought caused by strong undercurrents, the dismissal of topics that presently force their way in again, which are seen in his letters are seen here.<sup>b</sup> Moreover, the references to experiences at Ephesus which are not recorded in ch. xix but are alluded to in Paul's letters (1 Cor. iv. 12; 2 Cor. i. 8) show the trustworthiness of the report.<sup>c</sup> Hence Ewald is justified in saying that 'to doubt the genuineness of this speech is folly itself'. And herein lies its value for us. It reveals Paul as nothing else does. The man who spoke it is no longer a man of eighteen centuries ago: he is of yesterday; of to-day. He speaks as we speak and feels as we feel; or rather as we fain would speak and feel.<sup>d</sup>

**what manner of life I led.** The personal references, which are a marked feature of the speech, are characteristic of Paul even in his letters, and are therefore naturally found in such an outpouring of his heart as this. Like Samuel (1 Sam. xii. 3), he appeals to the knowledge and recollection of his hearers; as he does in 1 Thess. ii. 1, 5, 11, and in many other passages in his epistles.<sup>e</sup>

**19. serving.** The Greek word is used by Paul no less than six times in his letters. He loves to call himself 'the slave of the Lord'.

**plots.** These are not recorded in ch. xix, but may be referred to in 1 Cor. iv. 10 seq.; xv. 30, 31; 2 Cor. i. 4 seq.; vii. 5; xi. 23 seq.

**20. I kept back nothing.** This is in thorough harmony with utterances in his letters. 'Not handling the word of God deceitfully' (2 Cor. iv. 2). 'Am I seeking to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be the bond-slave of Christ' (Gal. i. 10). 'So we speak, not as pleasing men, but God which proveth our hearts' (1 Thess. ii. 4, and cf. ver. 11).

**21. repentance . . . and faith.** This summary is precisely what he had recently set forth at length in his letter to the Romans.<sup>f</sup>

**22. I go bound in the spirit.** He knew that his Lord had set him a task, and 'necessity was laid upon him' till it was accomplished. It is only by realizing that Paul regarded this journey as one of unavoidable duty that we can understand his determination to

<sup>a</sup> Gardner, p. 404.

<sup>c</sup> McGiffert, p. 339.

<sup>e</sup> Maclaren, ii, 188; Chase, p. 236.

<sup>b</sup> Chase, p. 235.

<sup>d</sup> Bungener, p. 115.

<sup>f</sup> Stokes, ii, 410.

persist at all hazards. On other occasions he did not expose himself needlessly to danger (xix. 30; xx. 3). But now he was engaged in a work which he regarded as the consummation of his previous labours. He was going with a band of representative Gentile converts, bearing to Israel offerings of love. Once he had not meant to go himself (see on ver. 4); the resolution of going had been gradually formed: he had come to feel that his work among the heathen had reached a certain degree of completeness. But he went with grave misgivings. Everywhere he had encountered hatred and persecution from the Jews. His danger at Corinth (ver. 3) was fresh in his memory. And what chiefly caused their hatred was the success of his preaching to the Gentiles. Why should it be otherwise at Jerusalem?<sup>a</sup>

24. **accomplish my race.** This vigorous figure is a favourite with Paul. It was as a race that life presented itself to him—an appointed field for continuous effort, all directed to one goal. And what was now aspiration became calm retrospect later, and he could write, 'I have accomplished my race' (2 Tim. iv. 7).<sup>b</sup>

The A. V. adds 'with joy'—the insertion of some copyist, who took the words from Phil. i. 4 or Col. i. 11. They lower the whole idea; for Paul was thinking solely of his work, and of himself not at all.<sup>c</sup>

25. **see my face no longer.** His work in the future was to be in the West and not among them. The 'no more' of the A. V. is a wrong translation of the Greek word, though his mind was no doubt, from his consciousness of the danger of his present mission, impressed with the idea that he would never re-visit Ephesus.<sup>d</sup> If the Pastoral Epistles are genuine, this presentiment was falsified (1 Tim. i. 3; iii. 4; iv. 13); if they are not, they show that there was an early tradition that he was released from his imprisonment. In either case they are evidence that this speech is not a fictitious composition, since no romancer would have put into Paul's mouth a quasi-prediction which was not fulfilled.<sup>e</sup>

28. **Take heed to yourselves.** Cf. the closely parallel passage in 1 Tim. iv. 16.

**overseers.** 'Bishops' (R. V.) is a very unfortunate translation, since it conveys an idea wholly foreign to the atmosphere of Ephesus in the middle of the first century. That the Greek word has here

<sup>a</sup> Baumgarten, ii. 321, 363 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Maclaren, ii. 194.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, ii. 200.

<sup>d</sup> Rendall, *Acts*; J. Robertson, p. 270.

<sup>e</sup> Chase, p. 262.

no such official sense is shown by the absence of any reference to bishops in Eph. iv. 11. Paul is addressing 'elders' (ver. 17), who were not independent heads of separate societies; and this word is not a title at all, but merely denotes their work—the oversight of the flock (cf. 1 Pet. v. 2, where the corresponding participle is used).

**29. after my departing.** That is, after my death. The Greek word means 'arrival'—arrival at home; cf. Phil. i. 23, 'to depart and to be with Christ.'<sup>a</sup>

**wolves.** That is, enemies from without the fold. He doubtless felt that the Judaizers, who had corrupted his teaching in Galatia, were sure to appear in Asia.

**30. from among your own selves.** How sadly this anticipation was realized may be seen from the warnings in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. i. 10; 2 Tim. i. 15; ii. 17, 18) against Phygelus and Hermogenes, who had turned away all Asia from Paul; and against Hymenaeus and Philetus and Alexander, who were infected with the errors of the Gnostics.<sup>b</sup> His long residence in Ephesus may well have enabled Paul to detect the germs of these evils. Thirty years later, John, writing from Ephesus, speaks (1 John ii. 19) of 'many anti-Christ's' who 'went out from us, but were not of us'.

**31. with tears.** Once more, it is the same Paul whom we know from his letters (2 Cor. ii. 4; Phil. iii. 18).

**32. to build you up.** Another favourite figure with Paul. How these Elders would recall this language about 'building' and 'inheritance', when they received the letter in which (Eph. ii. 20-22) he dwelt on the building of Christians into a holy temple and on the inheritance of the saints!<sup>c</sup>

**33. I coveted no man's silver or gold.** He had but too good reason for this disclaimer. One of the slanders which his enemies industriously propagated was that his collection for the poor of Jerusalem was really for himself. In commercial Ephesus many probably were ready to attribute their own mercenary motives to others. Paul's letters show his keen sensitiveness to such imputations of self-seeking.

**or apparel.** The wealth of Orientals consisted largely of clothing. Compare Naaman's 'changes of raiment' (2 Kings v. 5), and our Lord's allusion (Matt. vi. 19) to the 'moth'; and to the 'rust' (or 'blight') which attacked grain, the other chief form of wealth in the east.

<sup>a</sup> Chase, p. 253.

<sup>b</sup> Stokes, ii. 420.

<sup>c</sup> Fraser, p. 183.

**34. these hands.** As he held them up, they saw a tongue of truth in every seam that marked them. Luke has made no mention in ch. xix of Paul's manual labour at Ephesus, but these words are confirmed by 1 Cor. iv. 12, written from Ephesus—'We toil, working with our own hands.'

**and to them that were with me.** Timothy's 'often infirmities' (1 Tim. v. 23) may have incapacitated him at times from working.

**35. I gave you an example.** So he says (1 Cor. xi. 1), 'Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ' (cf. also Phil. iii. 17).

**so labouring.** That is, as I did, and with the like motive. Hence 'the weak' will not mean 'the poor', but the weak morally—imperfect disciples, who might be caused to stumble if large demands for maintenance were made by the Elders. At Ephesus, where pseudo-spiritual arts had been so commonly practised for lucre, it was specially desirable that the leaders of the Church should be above suspicion of interested motives.<sup>a</sup>

**the words of the Lord Jesus.** This 'Beatitude' is recorded here only. We do not know on what particular occasion the words were spoken by the Lord, but we cannot read the Gospels and find a day on which He was not saying them in His life. It was the one thing which He, who 'came not to be ministered unto, but to minister', was ever saying, and which Calvary finally illustrated.<sup>b</sup>

### 36-38

**36** And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. **37** And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, **38** sorrowing most of all for the word which he had spoken, that they should behold his face no longer. And they brought him on his way to the ship.

**36. he kneeled down.** It is interesting to note the attitude assumed in prayer. The usual posture of the Jew was standing (Matt. vi. 5), but our Lord knelt at Gethsemane (Luke xxii. 41).

**37. they all wept sore.** If Paul were more hated than most men, he had greater need of love than most, and he received it richly from his disciples.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Maclaten, ii. 193; Fraser, p. 181.

<sup>b</sup> Parker, iii. 6, 56; Maurice, p. 321.

<sup>c</sup> Gilbert, p. 172; F. B. Meyer, p. 145.



Since Timothy is not mentioned as being present at Jerusalem, he may have returned with the Elders to Ephesus, which seems to have been specially entrusted to his care. Gaius would represent the Churches of Galatia at Jerusalem.<sup>a</sup>

## CHAPTER XXI

### I-6

<sup>1</sup> And when we had torn ourselves away from them, and had put to sea, we ran with a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and thence to Patara. <sup>2</sup> And finding a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and put to sea. <sup>3</sup> And when we had sighted Cyprus, we left it on the left hand and sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unlade her cargo. <sup>4</sup> And having sought out the disciples we stayed there seven days. And they said to Paul through the Spirit that he should not set foot in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> But when we had completed our time, we departed and went on our journey: and they all with wives and children brought us on our way till we were out of the city: and kneeling down on the beach we prayed: <sup>6</sup> and after bidding each other farewell, we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

2. **finding a ship.** The small coaster had anchored each night; at Cos, Rhodes, and Patara successively. At the last place Paul was fortunate in finding a larger vessel which could venture to sail across the open sea to Tyre. This not only ensured his arrival at Jerusalem in time for the Feast, but left several days at his disposal.<sup>b</sup>

3. **Cyprus.** The sight of the island must have carried Paul's thoughts back to the day, some ten years before, when he had landed there with Barnabas to begin his missionary travels.<sup>c</sup>

**her cargo.** Doubtless corn, since Tyre, having but little territory, was dependent on a foreign food-supply. It must have been a large

<sup>a</sup> Lewin, ii. 96.

<sup>b</sup> Johnston, p. 141; Lewin, ii. 101.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, ii. 216.

ship, since she required seven days to unload and take on board a fresh freight.<sup>a</sup>

4. **sought out.** The word implies that the disciples were few in number. When the Church at Jerusalem was scattered after the death of Stephen, some (xi. 19) travelled as far as Phoenicia, and may have preached at Tyre. And Paul had himself passed through the country on his way from Antioch to the Conference (xv. 3), and may have had friends there.

His unflagging zeal in improving every opportunity is as astonishing as it is characteristic. After the exhausting work of many years, he might well have excused himself if he had spent the intervals of travel in taking rest, especially in view of the anxious days before him at Jerusalem. Yet at Troas he finished a week of evangelistic work by conversing with the disciples throughout the night. At Miletus he sent for the Elders of Ephesus and addressed them. At Tyre he 'sought out' the disciples, and laboured for seven days among them.<sup>b</sup>

**through the Spirit.** From the Spirit came the prediction of danger; the prohibition was the voice of human affection. The danger Paul himself already knew through the Spirit (xx. 13), but he had made up his mind that he ought to face it (xx. 22). God's calls do not supersede the duty of personal judgment. If one voice of God seems to say 'Stay', another voice of God may say 'Go'. Both courses may be right, but one may be nobler than the other.<sup>c</sup>

5. **they all.** The word suggests that they were a small community (see on ver. 4). The similarity and the difference between this leave-taking and that at Miletus show the eyewitness. In both we see an affectionate farewell; but here there were no bonds of long comradeship, none of the clinging love.<sup>d</sup>

**with wives and children.** The statement is interesting as showing the place held by the family in the Christian society.<sup>e</sup>

## 7-14

<sup>7</sup> And when we had landed at Ptolemais from Tyre, so completing our voyage, we saluted the brethren and remained with them one day. <sup>8</sup> And on the morrow we

<sup>a</sup> Stokes, ii. 425; Ramsay, *Paul*, 300.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, ii. 218; Vaughan, iii. 174.

<sup>e</sup> Iverach, p. 149.

<sup>b</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 386.

<sup>d</sup> Maclaren, ii. 218.

departed and came to Caesarea ; and going to the house of Philip the Evangelist, who was one of the Seven, we stayed with him. <sup>9</sup> Now this man had four daughters, virgins, who prophesied. <sup>10</sup> And as we stayed some days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, Agabus by name. <sup>11</sup> And coming to us, and taking up Paul's girdle, he bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, so will the Jews bind at Jerusalem the man whose girdle this is, and will deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. <sup>12</sup> And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> Then answered Paul, What mean ye, weeping and breaking down my resolution ? For I am ready not to be bound only but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>14</sup> And when he would not be persuaded, we desisted, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

**8. the Evangelist.** The word denotes (Eph. iv. 11) a definite calling, much like that of our 'missionary'.

These were Paul's last days of freedom, and he could not have spent them in more congenial society. Philip was, like himself, a Hellenist ; he had early displayed, in his preaching to the Samaritans and in his baptism of the Ethiopian, the large sympathy and clear vision which marked the Apostle to the Gentiles ; and he still showed the same breadth of view in his preference of half-heathen Caesarea to orthodox Jerusalem for a residence.<sup>a</sup> Yet there can have been few stranger meetings in history. Philip had been the colleague of Stephen, and Paul had been the young man at whose feet the stoners of Stephen laid their garments. Philip had been driven from Jerusalem by the persecution which Saul directed ; and, as the result, had anticipated Paul as a preacher to the Gentiles. And now the dreaded persecutor was the honoured guest of the persecuted ; and he who laid the foundation the host of him who raised the superstructure.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Farrar, ii. 288 ; Haweis, p. 167.

<sup>b</sup> Thomas, *Acts*, p. 374 ; Johnston, p. 141 ; Row, p. 83.

And another guest was present who adds to the interest of the meeting. Did Philip, we wonder, realize that the physician, who listened so eagerly to all that he could tell him about the early days of the Church, was going to perpetuate the record for all time? <sup>a</sup>

9. **four daughters, virgins.** That is, they were not merely unmarried, but devoted to a celibate life such as Paul commends in 1 Cor. (vii. 8, 26, 34). <sup>b</sup>

This verse has no bearing on the events, and the daughters are not said to have made any prediction about Paul's fate. Harnack thinks <sup>c</sup> that they were the source of much of Luke's information (he may have met them again on his departure from Caesarea (xxvii. 1)); and, if so, the fact would explain his mention of them (see on xix. 29).

Eusebius, however, says <sup>d</sup> that Philip 'the Apostle' had four daughters who prophesied. It is, of course, possible that he confused the two Philips. But he may be right; and in that case this verse must be a later insertion by some copyist who confused them. <sup>e</sup>

10. **Agabus.** Luke appears, from the way in which Agabus is introduced, to have forgotten that he had previously mentioned him (xi. 38—but see note there). Coming from Judaea, Agabus would have sufficient knowledge of the state of feeling in Jerusalem to assure him of dangerous consequences if Paul ventured thither, as the acknowledged leader of Gentile Christianity, at the time of a great festival, when fanatic Jews from all parts would be present. <sup>f</sup>

11. **he bound his own hands.** The Old Testament prophets were fond of such figurative actions (Jer. xiii. 4; xxvii. 2; Isa. xx. 3); but 'Thus saith the Holy Spirit' is a significant change from the Old Testament formula, 'Thus saith the Lord.' <sup>g</sup>

**will deliver him.** Jews would deliver him to Gentiles, as they had his Master. But there the curtain fell. Would his Master's fate be his? The half-disclosure was more trying to the courage than full details would have been. <sup>h</sup>

12. **besought him.** This fresh prediction intensified the impression made on the minds of Paul's own company by the prophets at Tyre. Even his chosen friends, who knew all that he hoped to effect by this journey, joined in trying to dissuade him from going further. All the greater must be our admiration for the man who

<sup>a</sup> Maclaren, ii. 230.

<sup>b</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> *Acts*, p. 192.

<sup>d</sup> *H. E.* iii. 39.

<sup>e</sup> Lange, *Acts*.

<sup>f</sup> Lange, *Acts*; Barnes, p. 272; Rendall, *Expositor*, iv. viii. 321.

<sup>g</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>h</sup> Maclaren, ii. 220.

would not be driven from his purpose even by this storm of love ; who, while tremblingly responsive to every thrill of human affection, was set firm as a rock for duty.<sup>a</sup>

**13. I am ready.** Centuries after, a man who in many ways closely resembled Paul showed the same courage. Luther, when the beloved Spalatin besought him not to venture to Worms, replied, 'Though devils be as many in Worms as tiles upon the roofs, yet thither will I go.'<sup>b</sup>

It is clear that to Luke this last journey of Paul to Jerusalem recalled another journey, when One greater than Paul steadfastly set His face to go, also for the last time, to the Holy City. He too had known His danger, and He too had to resist the remonstrance of His friends. 'Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone thee ; and goest thou thither again?' (John xi. 8). The servant was following in the Master's steps, and was filled with his Master's spirit (see on xxiii. 35).<sup>c</sup>

**also to die.** Paul was not to die at Jerusalem. To him, as to us, the future was left in obscurity. The one thing clearly revealed to him was his duty.

### 15-25

<sup>15</sup> And after these days we packed our baggage and went on our way up to Jerusalem. <sup>16</sup> And there went with us also certain of the disciples from Caesarea, conducting us to one Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge. <sup>17</sup> And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. <sup>18</sup> And the day following Paul went in with us to James ; and all the elders were present. <sup>19</sup> And when he had saluted them, he narrated in detail the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. <sup>20</sup> And they when they heard glorified God : and they said to him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews which have accepted the faith ; and they are all zealots for the Law : <sup>21</sup> and they have been

<sup>a</sup> Iverach, p. 151 ; Baumgarten, ii. 399 ; Haweis, p. 169.

<sup>b</sup> Thomas, *Acts*, p. 376.

<sup>c</sup> Iverach, p. 152 ; J. Robertson, p. 277.



sedulously instructed respecting thee that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles apostasy from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or to walk after the customs. <sup>22</sup> What is it then? They will certainly hear that thou art come. <sup>23</sup> Do therefore this that we say to thee. We have four men who are under a vow; <sup>24</sup> these take, and purify thyself with them, and bear their charges, that they may shave their heads: and all shall know that there is no truth in the things that they have been instructed respecting thee; but that thou thyself also walkest in observance of the Law. [<sup>25</sup> But, as touching the Gentiles which have accepted the faith, we wrote giving judgment that they should keep themselves from food offered to idols, and from blood, and from what is strangled, and from fornication.]

**15. packed our baggage.** It is possible that the 'contribution' consisted in part of clothing and provisions. But Professor Ramsay may be right<sup>a</sup> in understanding the Greek word to mean 'having saddled horses'; that is, they spared themselves the fatigue of two long stages on foot by riding the first day as far as Mnason's house.

**16. Mnason.** According to the Bezan text his house was not at Jerusalem, but in some village on the way thither (see on ix. 32). And this is probably correct. There would be no need to make provision for Paul's lodgement at Jerusalem, where he would easily obtain hospitality; but it would be a great convenience to break the long sixty-four miles' journey at a friend's house.<sup>b</sup>

**of Cyprus.** He may have been a friend of Barnabas and so specially interested in Paul. If he was one of the Cypriotes who first preached to Greeks at Antioch (xi. 19), he would know both Barnabas and Paul. Luke may have stayed with him at other times and have gleaned information from him. If so, the fact would account for the full mention of his name (see on ver. 9 and xix. 29).

**an early disciple.** This mention of the early date of his conversion may imply that, as the number of the first disciples lessened, the next generation accorded a sort of honour to the survivors.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Paul*, p. 302.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Expositor*, v. i. 213 seq.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, ii. 232.

**17. to Jerusalem.** Henceforward the narrative becomes much fuller, and it is clear that Luke must have had a definite purpose in devoting so disproportionate a space in his work to the arrest and imprisonment of Paul. Throughout the book, whenever Christianity comes into contact with the Roman authorities, its harmless character is vindicated. He now shows that, in the person of its chief missionary, it was after the fullest investigation acquitted.<sup>a</sup>

**the brethren.** These were Paul's personal friends, who welcomed him on his arrival. The formal meeting with the Elders is related in the following verses.

**18. with us.** The 'we' breaks off at this verse, and does not reappear till the departure from Caesarea (xxvii. 1). Whether Luke was with Paul between these points is doubtful.<sup>b</sup> If he had been with him during the two years of his imprisonment, it is difficult to see how he could have failed to learn matters of which his history betrays ignorance. On the other hand, there are scattered about these chapters detailed statements which point to the eyewitness; such as the shutting of the Temple doors (ver. 30), the carrying of the Apostle by the soldiers up the stairs (ver. 35), the motioning with the hand (ver. 40), the silence which fell on the crowd when they heard the words of Aramaic (xxii. 2), the tossing of garments and throwing of dust (xxii. 23), the minute description of the plot (xxiii. 12 seq.), &c.<sup>c</sup>

**to James.** The silence about the Twelve suggests that none of them were now at Jerusalem.

**all the elders.** Owing to the known prejudice of the Christian Jews against Paul, James had not called together the whole Church, but only the officials.<sup>d</sup>

The whole tone of the narrative implies that Paul was coldly received. We are not told of any expression of gratitude for the splendid offering from the Gentile brethren. It looks as though his misgiving as to its reception (Rom. xv. 31) was confirmed. Nor do we hear that the Christians of Jerusalem later put in so much as a word on his behalf with either the Jewish or the Roman authorities, or expressed any sympathy with him during his long imprisonment at Caesarea. And this conclusion is borne out by the Epistles, which say so much of the collecting of the contribution, but are silent about the reception with which it met.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> McGiffert, p. 346.

<sup>b</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 72.

<sup>c</sup> M. Jones, p. 165.

<sup>d</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>e</sup> Farrar, ii, 293; Schaff, i. 357; Gilbert, p. 175.

19. **he narrated.** Ending, no doubt, by pointing to his companions, the living attestation of the wonderful work of God among the Gentiles.<sup>a</sup>

20. **glorified God.** But abstained, apparently, from any acknowledgment of Paul's great work.

**how many thousands.** The number is surprising, even if it is a natural hyperbole to denote an indefinite multitude. But it may include the Christians in the towns of Judaea as well as those in Jerusalem; and at Pentecost many Christian Jews from other countries might be present.<sup>b</sup> And secular writers to some extent confirm the statement. Tacitus says that under Nero 'a vast multitude of Christians' were punished. And Pliny, writing half a century later,<sup>c</sup> bears witness to the wide spread of Christianity, not only in the towns, but in the villages. The temples, he says, were deserted and industries affected by the paucity of those who purchased animals for sacrifice.<sup>d</sup>

**they are all zealots.** This zeal for the law no doubt won toleration for the Christians at Jerusalem. And it would be intensified by the crisis through which the nation was passing, the time being one of acute political excitement in Judaea. But it was a serious obstacle to Christianity to have its centre in such a hot-bed of fanaticism; and we can see that the destruction of Jerusalem rendered it a signal service by helping it to disengage itself from Judaism.<sup>e</sup>

21. **sedulously instructed.** The Judaizers had been studiously spreading reports that Paul was teaching Jews to abandon the Law. In the eyes of the Church at Jerusalem this was a far more serious matter than the previous question at the Conference about the status of Gentile converts. If it were true, his action would be as abhorrent to the Judaizing Christians as to the Jewish zealots. And though it was untrue, there would be no difficulty in adducing plausible grounds for the assertion. We know from Paul's letters that he taught plainly that, in the matter of a sinner's acceptance with God, Jew and Gentile were on the same level (Rom. ii and iii). He spoke as strongly as possible against the Law as a means of salvation. He taught that Gentiles might become Christians without first becoming Jews. But he had never taught the Jew to throw aside the Law. 'Was any man called being circumcised,' he wrote, 'let him not become uncircumcised' (1 Cor. vii. 18). He himself must have kept up his Jewish habits or he would not have been

<sup>a</sup> Baumgarten, ii. 422.

<sup>b</sup> M. Jones, p. 178; Schaff, i. 357.

<sup>c</sup> *Ep. ad Traj.* xcvi.

<sup>d</sup> Ropes, p. 61.

<sup>e</sup> Purves, p. 160; Renan, *Paul*, p. 291.

tolerated at all among the Jews. His intercourse with them during such periods as his first three months at Ephesus would have been impossible, if he had not been living in general compliance with the ceremonial law. But these things were to him external matters, in no way essential to the religious life. And his removal of them from the class of things necessary to the class of things optional was undoubtedly a first step to their abolition. And the Judaizers, seeing this, charged him with actually teaching that which was certainly the logical outcome of his teaching.<sup>a</sup>

**23. this that we say.** The brethren at Jerusalem had evidently determined on this policy before Paul's arrival.<sup>b</sup>

**24. purify thyself with them.** The whole process is wrapt in obscurity, but apparently the person who paid the expenses of a poor Nazirite (which was a fairly common act of charity at Jerusalem) so far shared the vow as to stay with the Nazirite in the Temple during the entire period of seclusion, in order to avoid the danger of ceremonial pollution.<sup>c</sup>

What the Elders recommended was a practical refutation of the dangerous charge. It would, they thought, dissipate all suspicion, if Paul were himself publicly to conform to one of those 'customs' which he was accused of subverting. And the plan would have the further advantage of keeping him within the precincts of the Temple, secure, as they hoped, from danger for seven days, by the end of which time many of the fanatical pilgrims would have left Jerusalem.<sup>d</sup>

**bear their charges.** The Nazirite vow was a costly one, and the victims required for four men would entail a considerable expenditure. Professor Ramsay calls attention<sup>e</sup> to the indications that at this time Paul had command of large sums. A poor man would not have been treated with the respect paid to him at Caesarea, on the voyage, and at Rome. Felix did not look for a small bribe from him. An appeal to the Emperor was a costly matter. He took his companions with him on the voyage. He was able to hire a lodging at Rome. It may be that on his missionary journeys he had deliberately chosen to follow Jesus' command to His Apostles (Luke ix. 3), and exemplify the dignity of labour by accepting no maintenance from his converts. But it is possible that property had recently come to him (see further on xxii. 28).

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 143; Morrison, p. 114; J. Robertson, p. 282; Iverach, p. 155; Burrell, p. 267; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 380.

<sup>b</sup> A. T. Robertson, p. 223.

<sup>c</sup> Farrar, ii. 296.

<sup>d</sup> Bungener, p. 304; Baring-Gould, p. 390.

<sup>e</sup> *Paul*, p. 310 seq.; *Pictures*, p. 295.

25. **But, as touching.** This verse is almost certainly a gloss. If it is genuine, it is an explanation, to prevent any misunderstanding, that their view of the relation of Gentile Christians to the Law had undergone no change since the decision at the Conference.<sup>a</sup>

## 26-36

<sup>26</sup> Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them went into the temple (notifying the day on which the purification would be ended), until the offering should have been offered for every one of them. <sup>27</sup> And when the seven days were on the point of being completed, the Jews from Asia saw him in the temple, and began to stir up all the multitude; and laid hands on him, <sup>28</sup> crying out, Men of Israel, help! This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people and the Law and this place; and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath defiled this holy place. (<sup>29</sup> For they had previously seen with him in the city Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple). <sup>30</sup> And all the city was moved, and the people ran together; and they laid hold on Paul and dragged him out of the temple; and straightway the doors were shut. <sup>31</sup> And as they were seeking to kill him, tidings went up to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in a ferment. <sup>32</sup> And forthwith he took soldiers and centurions and ran down upon them; and they, when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, left off beating Paul. <sup>33</sup> Then the tribune making his way to him arrested him, and commanded that he should be bound with two chains, and sought to learn who he was and what he had done. <sup>34</sup> And some shouted one thing against him, some another, among the crowd; and when

<sup>a</sup> Morrison, p. 115.



he could not know the certainty for the uproar, he commanded that he should be taken into the barracks.  
<sup>35</sup> And when he came upon the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers on account of the violence of the crowd: for the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, Away with him.

26. **Then Paul.** If he had refused, his refusal would have been at once construed as proof of the charge against him.<sup>a</sup> Nor was there any real inconsistency in his action. For it was not Jewish ceremonial to which he objected, but the insistence on it as necessary. His epistles show that he no longer attached importance to it, but they furnish no evidence that he was personally lax with regard to it. Probably he was ready at any time to perform ceremonial functions, not only with a clear conscience, but, when Judaizing opposition to his Gentile mission did not come into play, with gladness and reverence. He was, and he remained, a Jew. Here in the venerable Mother Church it was right to respect the national customs, and, if necessary, accommodate himself to weaker brethren.<sup>b</sup> Had he not avowed to the Corinthians (1 Cor. ix. 20) the principle of becoming as a Jew to Jews? And had he not yet more recently written to the Romans (xiv. 13) that ceremonial observances should be complied with rather than a stumbling-block be thrown in another's way?

At the same time, it must be confessed that his action in consenting surprises us, especially as he was accompanied by delegates from his Gentile Churches. He was not perfect, and he appears on this occasion to have been unduly influenced by considerations of expediency. He was not the scrupulous observer of the ceremonial law which the Elders wished him to appear to be. We know that he did not mean to imply by his action that such ceremonial observance was in the least degree necessary to salvation. But what did he intend by it? Clearly, to convey to the Christians at Jerusalem something more than that he considered it a matter of indifference. The object was to show that he was under no circumstances a neglecter of the law, but as scrupulous a keeper of it as themselves. 'That all may know that there is no truth in the things that they have been instructed respecting thee' was the reason given (ver. 24).<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> A. T. Robertson, p. 224.

<sup>b</sup> Maclaren, ii. 240; Harnack, *Acts*, p. 236; Schaff, i. 361.

<sup>c</sup> Blunt, ii. 100 seq.

And the result is instructive. He had stooped to a compromise, not from tenderness towards weak brethren, but in order to conciliate opponents. And, like most compromises, it failed. It not only did not produce the desired effect, but actually precipitated the crisis which it was designed to avert.<sup>a</sup>

**27. the seven days.** This is usually understood of the time occupied by the offerings of the Nazirites; but it is at least possible that it refers to the Pentecostal week, for which Paul desired to be present (xx. 16).<sup>b</sup>

**from Asia.** Probably from Ephesus, since they recognized Trophimus the Ephesian.<sup>c</sup> Few of the Jerusalem Jews would know Paul by sight, but the Ephesian Jews would know him well. They had plotted against him in vain in the province (xx. 19); now their opportunity had come. If the cry was raised by Alexander the copper-smith it will explain the statement (2 Tim. iv. 14) that this man had wrought Paul 'much evil'.

**28. that teacheth all men.** The three first charges were a deft combination of truth and falsehood. Paul had not taught 'against the people', but he had said that being a Jew would not save a man. He had not taught 'against the law', but he had said that it was not binding on Gentiles. He had not declaimed 'against this place', but he had taught that the Temple was not the only place for worshipping God acceptably.<sup>d</sup> As for the further accusation, it was wholly false. He had not brought 'Greeks' into the Temple—not even the one Greek whom malice multiplied into many. To do so would have exposed Trophimus as well as himself to death, since the Romans had given<sup>e</sup> the Jews the right to inflict the death penalty on any Gentile who trespassed beyond the court of the Gentiles.<sup>f</sup>

**29. they supposed.** Not content with a malicious generalization from a single individual, they further assumed a supposition to be a fact.

**30. all the city was moved.** The populace was more than usually excitable at the time of the great feasts, when it was swelled by fanatical pilgrims. It does not appear that the 'many thousands of believing Jews' (ver. 20) interfered to save the man who had come with a gift of love to their poor. If they did not make common cause with their unbelieving brethren, they kept in the background.<sup>g</sup>

**out of the temple.** These scrupulous Jews would not defile the

<sup>a</sup> Maurice, p. 327; J. Robertson, p. 284.

<sup>b</sup> Schaff, i. 361.

<sup>c</sup> Gilbert, p. 179.

<sup>d</sup> Burrell, p. 271.

<sup>e</sup> Josephus, *B. J.* vi. 2, 4.

<sup>f</sup> Maclaren, ii. 242; Buss, p. 330.

<sup>g</sup> Cone, p. 137; Baumgarten, ii. 449.

holy place with blood. But their punctiliousness saved Paul's life. By the time that they had dragged him to the outer court the Roman troops were on the spot.<sup>a</sup>

**the doors.** Separating the inner court from the court of the Gentiles.

31. **went up.** The writer was obviously familiar with the topography. The Roman garrison was quartered in the tower of Antonia, overlooking the Temple court, with which it was connected by a flight of steps.

32. **centurions.** The plural shows that the force amounted to several hundreds. The rapidity with which they appeared suggests that they were prepared. We know from the Gospels (Matt. xxvi. 5) how anxious the Jewish authorities were to avoid all cause of popular excitement during the festivals; and the Roman tribune would share that anxiety.<sup>b</sup>

**left off beating Paul.** Many of those present would remember how, some ten years before this date, when a riot broke out in the Temple at the Passover, the Roman guard had marched down and in the panic that ensued hundreds had been trampled to death.

33. **arrested him.** It has been suggested that, though Aristarchus could not have been with Paul in the inner court, since he was not a Jew, he may have tried to shield him and have been arrested with him, since he sailed with him from Caesarea (xxvii. 2) and is said by Paul to be his 'fellow prisoner' at Rome (Col. iv. 10). But, if arrested at this time, he could scarcely have been included in Paul's appeal to the Emperor; and the inference from Col. iv. 10 is doubtful, since in writing to Philemon (ver. 24) Paul calls him his 'fellow worker' and speaks of Epaphras as his 'fellow prisoner'. Thus it looks as though Aristarchus did not sail as a prisoner to Rome, but that at Rome Paul's companions relieved one another in voluntarily sharing his captivity.<sup>c</sup>

### 37-39

<sup>37</sup> And as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the tribune, Have I leave to say somewhat to thee? And he said, Dost thou know Greek? <sup>38</sup> Thou art not, then, the Egyptian who a short while ago stirred

<sup>a</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 384.

<sup>b</sup> Buss, p. 334; Iverach, p. 159.

<sup>c</sup> *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 299.

up insurrection and led out into the wilderness the four thousand of the Assassins ? <sup>33</sup> But Paul said, I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no undistinguished city; and I beseech thee, give me leave to speak unto the people.

37. **Have I leave ?** Note the calm courtesy of his request. A moment before he had been face to face with death in its most unnerving form. Yet he is not only ready to seize the opportunity of speaking a word for his Lord, but is so far master of himself as to be able to use all his resources, and to marshal his facts in the way most likely to propitiate his hostile audience.<sup>a</sup>

38. **Thou art not, then.** Evidently it was notorious that this Egyptian could not speak Greek; and the tribune, being addressed in that language, discovered that he was mistaken in his conjecture about Paul. Two months before this time, as we learn from Josephus,<sup>b</sup> an Egyptian fanatic gathered a large force of Jews and led them to the Mount of Olives to see the walls of Jerusalem fall before him. They were there attacked and massacred by Felix, but the Egyptian himself escaped; and the Jews whom he had duped would be furious with him. Thus Lysias' conjecture that his unpopular prisoner was the Egyptian was natural enough; but Paul must have smiled at the irony by which he, who had been for twenty years preaching the Gospel, was mistaken for the leader of 'the Assassins'—the name assumed by a band of cut-throats who appeared about this time.

39. **of no undistinguished city.** The words appear to be a plain reference to a passage in Euripides.<sup>c</sup> Harnack thinks<sup>d</sup> that Paul may have wished to prove to the tribune that he was no Egyptian fanatic, but a man of Hellenic culture.

It is strange that he did not appeal to his Roman citizenship, which would at once have impressed the tribune with his respectability. Professor Ramsay observes<sup>e</sup> that Paul's answer shows his patriotic love for his native city—that 'Tarsian' was the description of himself which lay nearest to his heart. Thus the spirit of patriotism finds its consecration here. Doubtless the frail figure lifted itself at the words, as at the 'But I am free born' of xxii. 28.

**give me leave.** There was something strangely masterful in such

<sup>a</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, 371; Maclaren, ii. 245.

<sup>b</sup> *Antiquities*, xx. 8. 6.

<sup>c</sup> *Ion* 8. *ἔστιν γὰρ οὐκ ἄσημος Ἑλλήνων πόλις.*

<sup>d</sup> *Acts*, p. 60.

<sup>e</sup> *Expositor*, April, 1906.

a request at such a moment, and clearly the tribune recognized that he had no ordinary man before him. Indeed, few men just rescued from a violent death at the hands of an infuriated mob would have been thus self-possessed. Probably we are liable to be misled by his own account of what his enemies said of him (2 Cor. x. 10)—that ‘his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible’—as though it were a true description. But this scene should undeceive us. Set upon and beaten by a mob, with difficulty rescued by soldiers, with clothing torn and dishevelled, he has only to raise his hand and speak, and the angry crowd is hushed and listens.<sup>a</sup>

It is likely that Paul had been longing, ever since his arrival in the city, for an opportunity of addressing the people. Now the chance offered, and he eagerly seized it. Yet his bodily suffering from violence must have been less than his suffering in mind. He had come to Jerusalem as a messenger of peace, full of yearning love for his nation, laden with liberal gifts for her poor; and he had been met with nothing but ingratitude and murderous malice. Yet his words betray no bitterness. To win them for his Master—that is all he thinks of. Truly he is the man who wrote (1 Cor. ix. 16), ‘Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!’

## CHAPTER XXII

xxi. 40 – xxii. 5

<sup>40</sup> And when he had given him leave, Paul standing on the stairs motioned with his hand to the people; and when a great silence ensued, he spake to them in the Hebrew language, saying, <sup>xxii.</sup><sup>1</sup> Brethren and fathers, hear ye my defence which I now make to you. <sup>2</sup> And when they heard him speaking to them in the Hebrew language, they kept the more quiet; and he said, <sup>3</sup> I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, trained in strict observance of the Law of our fathers, full from the first of zeal for God, even as ye all are this day: <sup>4</sup> for I persecuted this Way unto death, binding and delivering into prisons

<sup>a</sup> Lyman Abbott, p. 13.



both men and women ; <sup>5</sup> as indeed the high priest can bear me witness and the whole body of the elders ; from whom I received letters also to the brethren, and was on my way to Damascus, to bring them also who had fled thither bound unto Jerusalem, that they might be punished.

**40. when he had given him leave.** The concession has been thought improbable. But strong men recognize one another : the brave Roman was struck by the courage of the request. Besides, it was clear that his prisoner was no ordinary criminal—the courteous speech showed so much ; and Lysias' curiosity was excited.<sup>a</sup>

**a great silence.** The sight of the small, fragile man with mobile features, calmly superior to insult and violence, standing on the stairs with the legionaries round him and the crowd below him, and commanding silence with upraised hand, overawed the mob, and the clamour died away into a hush of expectancy.<sup>b</sup>

**in the Hebrew language.** Not because they would not have understood Greek, but because by speaking as a Jew in the Palestinian Aramaic he enlisted their sympathy ; whereas the use of the Greek language would have served to emphasize the charge that he was unfaithful to the traditions of his own people.

The statement that Paul spoke in Aramaic looks like the personal touch of one who was present.<sup>c</sup> Luke may have been himself there, but we cannot be sure that he understood that language, though he would easily gather the purport of the speech from bystanders. In any case the Greek dress is his ; and the objection to the authenticity of the speech founded on the absence of Pauline expressions<sup>d</sup> is met by the fact that, as we have it, it is Luke's translation of the original.

We have seen (note on xiii. 16) that Luke gives typical specimens of Paul's addresses to different audiences. That he was not content to give a single specimen of his speeches in his own defence suggests that the three discourses in ch. xxii, xxiv, and xxvi rest upon a historical foundation.<sup>e</sup>

**1. my defence.** It was no time for argument, except the argument of facts ; and his defence is an appeal to facts—the story of his

<sup>a</sup> Maclaren, ii. 246 ; J. Robertson, p. 287.

<sup>b</sup> Haweis, p. 180.

<sup>c</sup> Gardner, p. 409.

<sup>d</sup> Davidson, *Introd. to N. T.* ii. 121.

<sup>e</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 130.

life, and particularly of his conversion. Nearly a quarter of a century had passed since that vision on the road to Damascus—years crowded with all the stirring adventures of a missionary's life ; yet the story is just the same. Lapse of time has not blurred the memory of that wonderful experience ; imagination has not amplified the details ; the vision, seen through the vista of years, does not seem an unreal dream ; it is as vivid as ever. Nor does Paul apologize for his story as something which his hearers might deem incredible. Quietly and soberly he speaks of facts—of what he had seen and heard. His Lord had met him and spoken to him—that was the great fact of his life and the unanswerable defence of his creed. His former zeal for the Law was the measure of the strength of the conviction which had changed his whole life.<sup>a</sup>

2. **kept the more quiet.** We have here an interesting indication of the wide use of Greek in Palestine. It is clear that while they preferred to be addressed in Aramaic, they would have understood Paul if he had spoken in Greek.<sup>b</sup>

3. **I am a Jew.** He uses the same words as he had just addressed to Lysias, but the emphasis is adroitly changed. Tarsus is no longer in the foreground, but Jerusalem.<sup>c</sup>

**brought up.** The Greek word implies that he had been sent to Jerusalem at quite an early age, and this is borne out by xxvi. 4, 'My manner of life *from my youth,*' &c. When he left the city we cannot say, but he can scarcely have been in Palestine in the Baptist's time. Such a spirit as his could not fail to have been influenced by a movement which swept through the whole country. Nor can he have seen Jesus during His life on earth. The man who felt his persecution of the Church as a lifelong reproach never accuses himself with reference to Jesus personally ; and he speaks (2 Cor. v. 16) of those who had known Jesus in the flesh as boasting a superiority over him.<sup>d</sup>

**Gamaliel.** The assertion that he had been a pupil of Gamaliel has been questioned ; but his letters conclusively prove that he had been trained in the Rabbinical schools. They also refer to the same facts as are emphasized here—his Jewish birth, his Jewish training, and his zeal for the law carried to the point of persecution (cf. Phil. iii. 5, 6 ; Gal. i. 13, 14).<sup>e</sup>

**even as ye all.** So far from protesting against the fanaticism to which he had so nearly fallen a victim, he implies, with his usual

<sup>a</sup> Parker, iii. 80 seq.

<sup>b</sup> Row, p. 239.

<sup>c</sup> Howson, *Character*, p. 30.

<sup>d</sup> Hausrath, iii. 32.

<sup>e</sup> Wrede, p. 4 ; M. Jones, p. 186.

tact, that he could easily understand their feeling and make allowance for it. For was not he too a Jew, and had not he too once been as furious against Christianity as they were?<sup>a</sup>

4. **this Way.** He avoids any irritating name for the Christian body.<sup>b</sup>

5. **the brethren.** He tactfully adopts his hearers' point of view, and calls the unconverted Jews of Damascus 'brethren', and nowhere in this speech applies that word to the Christians.<sup>c</sup>

## 6-11

<sup>6</sup> And it came to pass that, as I was journeying and drawing nigh to Damascus, about noon there suddenly flashed from heaven a great light round about me.

<sup>7</sup> And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, Saoul, Saoul, why art thou persecuting me? <sup>8</sup> And I answered, Sir, who art thou? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou art persecuting.

<sup>9</sup> And they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

<sup>10</sup> And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Rise, and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. <sup>11</sup> And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

6. **it came to pass.** For the discrepancies in the three accounts of the Conversion see on ix. 3. That Luke left them, when he could easily have moulded them into conformity, is the best proof that this speech is not a mere composition of his own, and that his narrative is essentially truthful. It has been pointed out<sup>d</sup> that, whereas Paul might well repeat the story of his Conversion, Luke, who had already narrated it, would be unlikely to repeat it twice, if he were merely composing speeches.

<sup>a</sup> Fraser, p. 190.

<sup>c</sup> Howson, *Character*, p. 33.

<sup>b</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Headlam, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. 'Acts'.

## 12-16

<sup>12</sup> And one Ananias, a devout man according to the Law and so reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there, <sup>13</sup> came to me and, standing over me, said, Brother Saoul, look up. And in that very hour I looked up on him. <sup>14</sup> And he said, The God of our fathers fore-ordained thee to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth. <sup>15</sup> For thou shalt be a witness for him to all men of what thou hast seen and heard. <sup>16</sup> And now why delayest thou? Rise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name.

12. **a devout man.** He tactfully avoids calling him a 'disciple', as Luke calls him in his narrative (ix. 10).

13. **came to me.** He says nothing of the vision to Ananias, and so avoids quoting expressions, such as 'thy saints' (ix. 13) and 'the Lord Jesus' (ix. 17), which would have irritated his Jewish audience.<sup>a</sup>

15. **to all men.** He is approaching the point of danger—the commission to preach to the Gentiles—but he avoids the use of the offensive word as long as possible.

## 17-21

<sup>17</sup> And it came to pass, when I had returned to Jerusalem, that, as I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance, <sup>18</sup> and saw him saying to me, Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, seeing that they will not receive thy witness concerning me. <sup>19</sup> And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in synagogue after synagogue them that believe in thee; <sup>20</sup> and when the blood of thy witness Stephen was shed, I was even myself standing by and approving, and keeping the garments of them that slew him.

<sup>a</sup> Howson, *Character*, p. 37.

<sup>21</sup> And he said to me, Go thy way; for I will send thee forth far hence to Gentiles.

**17. when I had returned.** He omits all mention of his preaching at Damascus, since he does not wish to recall the fact that he had there been persecuted by the Jews.<sup>a</sup>

**in the temple.** So little had his conversion to Christianity estranged him from the Temple that on his first return to Jerusalem he went thither to pray; and so little had it estranged him from his own people that his first anxiety was to preach to them.<sup>b</sup>

**18. saw him.** Some<sup>c</sup> assign this vision to the time of the visit to Jerusalem recorded in xi. 30. But the context here appears to be conclusive against them. As Paul went to Damascus (ver. 6), Jesus appeared to him; when he 'returned' to Jerusalem, Jesus appeared again to him. There cannot have been a return to Jerusalem between two appearances thus narrated. Nor can Paul have been told at the visit of xi. 30 that he was to be sent to the Gentiles, among whom he had then been working for years, and from whom at Antioch he had just come on a deputation.<sup>d</sup>

**19. I said.** His object in recording this visit is to show that his heart was so set on preaching to his own countrymen that he hesitated to obey the Divine command until it was repeated sharply and decisively.

**20. thy witness.** Not 'martyr' (A. V.). The word must bear the same meaning as it does in ver. 18.

**21. to Gentiles.** At last the word they hated could be no longer kept back, and it fell like a spark into a magazine. There was an instant explosion of fanatical rage. They did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but it was not His name which roused their fury. It was that a Jew, who claimed that the Messiah had come, should assert that he was sent by Him to set up His Kingdom among the Gentiles.<sup>e</sup>

## 22-29

<sup>22</sup> And they gave him audience as far as this word, and then lifted up their voice and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; he ought not to have been

<sup>a</sup> Howson, *Character*, p. 38.

<sup>c</sup> Thiersch, p. 119; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 60.

<sup>e</sup> Gilbert, p. 182.

<sup>b</sup> Lange, *Acts*.

<sup>d</sup> Zeller, i. 202.



allowed to live. <sup>23</sup> And as they cried out and shook their garments and cast dust into the air, <sup>24</sup> the tribune commanded that he should be brought into the barracks, and be examined by scourging, that he might know for what cause they shouted thus against him. <sup>25</sup> But when they stretched him forward with the thongs, Paul said to the centurion which stood by, Does the law permit you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned? <sup>26</sup> And when the centurion heard it, he went to the tribune and told him, saying, What art thou about? This man is a Roman. <sup>27</sup> And the tribune came and said to him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? And he said, Yes. <sup>28</sup> And the tribune answered, With a great sum obtained I this citizenship. And Paul answered, But I am a citizen by birth. <sup>29</sup> Straightway then they departed from him which were about to examine him: and the tribune also was afraid, when he knew that he was a Roman and that he had bound him.

**23. cast dust.** A token of detestation. So Shimei threw dust at David (2 Sam. xvi. 13).

**24. the tribune.** He was more puzzled than ever. He would probably be unable to follow the Aramaic speech, and may also have been annoyed at the result of the indulgence which he had granted. If no one can tell him what all this business means, he will take summary measures to find out.

**25. when they stretched him forward.** The same difficulty suggests itself as at xvi. 37. Why did not Paul proclaim his citizenship earlier? Why wait till he had been bound? The explanation may be that hitherto he had deliberately abstained from cutting himself off from his own people, whom he so passionately loved, by claiming to be a Roman. Now, as he was being bound for the scourging, the realization came to him that he had no longer a place among his own nation. He had just delivered a speech in which he had based his defence on his Jewish birth and training and zeal, and it had been of no avail. His life would have been sacrificed, if the Roman power had not stepped in and saved him.

Henceforth he must look to Rome for safety, and claim his Roman privileges, if he was to have justice done to him. Thus the assertion of his citizenship at this crisis marks a definite epoch in his career. For the future he is Paul the Roman Christian, not Paul the Jew.<sup>a</sup>

**Does the law.** It was a capital offence to scourge a Roman citizen (see on xvi. 37). The misstatement in Lysias' letter (xxiii. 26) is the measure of his alarm at having ordered such a procedure.<sup>b</sup>

**uncondemned.** See on xvi. 37.

**27. art thou a Roman?** The pronoun is emphatic in the Greek. Lysias was more than ever perplexed by this intelligence.

**28. With a great sum.** From his name Lysias was probably a Greek by birth. If he had been an Italian, he would have been a citizen by the Julian Law of 90 B.C.<sup>c</sup>

**by birth.** Some ancestor must have won the citizenship as a reward for distinguished service. The idea that Paul was descended from a freedman is negatived by the various indications that his family was of good social position. He was educated by the greatest of the Rabbis; he was at an early age entrusted by the Jewish authorities with an important commission; his nephew could gain ready access to the Roman tribune; he was treated as a person of consequence by Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and Julius.<sup>d</sup>

**29. had bound him.** That is, for scourging. It refers to ver. 25, not to xxi. 33. He was still chained to a soldier (ver. 30 and xxvi. 29) after his citizenship was known.

## CHAPTER XXIII

xxii. 30-xxiii. 10.

<sup>30</sup> And on the morrow, desiring to know for a surety of what he was accused by the Jews, he loosed him, and commanded the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and, bringing Paul down, set him among them. <sup>xxiii. 1</sup> And Paul looking stedfastly on the Council said, Brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. <sup>2</sup> And the high priest Ananias

<sup>a</sup> M. Jones, p. 190.

<sup>b</sup> Benson, p. 553.

<sup>c</sup> Buss, p. 336.

<sup>d</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 125.

commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. <sup>3</sup> Then said Paul to him, God shall smite thee, thou whitewashed wall: and sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? <sup>4</sup> And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? <sup>5</sup> And Paul said, I wist not, brethren, that it was the high priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people. <sup>6</sup> But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the Council, Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees: touching the hope of a resurrection of the dead I am on my trial. <sup>7</sup> And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. <sup>8</sup> For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit; but Pharisees acknowledge both. <sup>9</sup> And there arose a great clamour; and some of the Scribes of the Pharisees' part sprang to their feet and contended, saying, We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit spake to him, or an angel—! <sup>10</sup> And when the dissension waxed violent, the tribune, fearing lest Paul should be torn in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them and bring him into the barracks.

**30. commanded the chief priests.** The Procurator had power to summon the Sanhedrin; and in his absence the tribune represented him in Jerusalem.<sup>a</sup>

**set him among them.** Lysias did not mean them to judge the case of a Roman citizen; but, being ignorant what Paul's offence was, and seeing that it was apparently some infraction of Jewish law, he wished them to investigate it in his presence.

**1. looking stedfastly.** The words may imply that he eagerly scanned the faces before him, to see if any of his former associates

<sup>a</sup> Josephus, *Antiq.* xx. 9. 1; Buss, p. 367.

were there. Gamaliel was dead, but his two sons, Simon and Jesus, must have been known to Paul.<sup>a</sup>

**on the Council.** The people had rejected the Gospel—what will the Council do? That Council, which had passed sentence on Jesus, and Peter, and Stephen, is to have one more, and last, opportunity of accepting it.<sup>b</sup>

**Brethren.** He does not address them as Peter had done (iv. 8), 'Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel', but speaks as an equal to equals. The court was held, not to try a criminal, but to investigate facts for the guidance of the tribune. Such was evidently Paul's view of the situation.<sup>c</sup>

**I have lived.** The speech was probably on much the same lines as that to the people on the preceding day. But whereas he had then appealed to the outward facts which had determined his action, he is now anxious to make clear his motives. He sums it all up by saying that throughout he had followed his conscience.<sup>d</sup> He had been conscientious, when he persecuted the Church: he had thought, he says elsewhere (xxvi. 9), that he 'ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth'. He had been conscientious, when he changed his whole life: 'I was not', he says (xxvi. 19), 'disobedient to the heavenly vision.'

This appeal to conscience is thoroughly Pauline. Cf. 2 Cor. i. 12, 'For our glorying is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world.'

**2. Ananias.** A man of bad character and notoriously corrupt, he had been deposed from his office by the Romans. That he was now presiding may imply, either that he had been reinstated, or that he had never ceased to be regarded by the Jews as high priest.

**commanded.** That the chief magistrate in presence of the Council could be guilty of an act of such ruffianly rudeness is a significant indication of the degradation of Jewish society at this time.<sup>e</sup> Josephus speaks<sup>f</sup> of the overbearing manners of the Jewish ecclesiastics, and of the brutality of their retainers to those unable to resist.<sup>g</sup>

At the same time it must be admitted that Paul, in thus beginning his speech with a protestation of his own rectitude, showed a lack

<sup>a</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 396; Macduff, *Paul*, p. 308.

<sup>c</sup> Eadie, p. 367; Arnot, p. 459.

<sup>e</sup> Arnot, p. 460.

<sup>b</sup> Stifler, p. 223.

<sup>d</sup> Baumgarten, iii. 26.

<sup>g</sup> J. Thomas, p. 147.

<sup>f</sup> *Antiq.* xx. 9. 2.

of the tact, and desire to conciliate his audience, and power to adapt himself to circumstances, which are such striking characteristics of all his other recorded utterances.<sup>a</sup> It may well have been the case that he was shaken and unnerved by the terrible experiences of the preceding day.

**to smite him on the mouth.** A favourite form of argument among the Jews (Luke vi. 29; John xviii. 22; 2 Cor. xi. 20). Ananias perhaps wished to assert himself in the presence of the Gentile soldier who had 'commanded' the Sanhedrin to meet; perhaps he resented the claim to equality on Paul's part implied in the word 'Brethren'; perhaps he regarded the assertion of conscious rectitude as a side-blow at his own notoriously evil life. Or it may be, as Professor Ramsay thinks, that the Greek word translated 'lived' (ver. 1), which literally meant 'acted as a citizen', and implied the free self-governing life of the Greek, seemed to Ananias to be a provocative admission of the offence charged against him, viz. that he sacrificed Jewish customs to Gentile modes of life.<sup>b</sup>

**3. God shall smite thee.** The wanton outrage provoked an outburst of anger on Paul's part. His conduct has been contrasted with that of Jesus (John xviii. 22), who, 'when he suffered, threatened not' (1 Pet. ii. 23). But when Jesus was smitten on the face, the outrage was not so gross as now; it was not by the express command of His judge. And the reason which Paul gave for his anger is not a personal one. He protested against an act of flagrant injustice, not only in his own name, but in that of every man in all time who is outrageously treated.<sup>c</sup>

**thou whitewashed wall.** In a court of justice he had outraged the justice which he was there to administer. His white robe, clothing a character that was not white, reminded Paul of the outward cleanness and the inward corruption of a whitewashed sepulchre.<sup>d</sup>

**5. I wist not.** It is easy to imagine half a dozen reasons for such want of recognition, but very difficult to find one for the insertion of the incident without some historic justification.<sup>e</sup> The obvious explanation of the words is the best. Paul had heard the order given, but did not know from whom it came. Finding that

<sup>a</sup> M. Jones, p. 198.

<sup>b</sup> Maurice, p. 330; Farrar, ii. 320; Ramsay, *Pictures*, p. 281.

<sup>c</sup> Farrar, ii. 323; Bungener, p. 314; Parker, iii. 100.

<sup>d</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 404.

<sup>e</sup> Gardner, p. 390.



it had come from the high priest, he admits, not that the rebuke was undeserved, but that it was unbecoming on account of the respect due to the office.

6. **when Paul perceived.** The Pharisees and Sadducees probably sat apart, and any one familiar with Jerusalem could tell from dress and demeanour who were Pharisees and who Sadducees. But these words may be Luke's own inference, and not derived from Paul, just as ver. 8 is his own explanation.<sup>a</sup>

**I am a Pharisee.** The question has been raised<sup>b</sup> whether Paul was ingenuous in speaking thus. Certainly he was not any longer a Pharisee in the sense in which his hearers would understand the term. He had no sympathy with the Pharisees' respect for tradition, their formalism, their ostentation, their self-righteousness, their view that good works constituted the ground of hope towards God. But we must remember that the name has become to us a synonym for religious pride and hypocrisy owing to our Lord's stern rebukes of the corruption of Pharisaism. The Pharisaic ideals were in no way opposed to the Christian spirit. In its origin Pharisæism was a revolt against the secularization of the national life, and a recognition of the sacred mission of the Jewish race. Amid the prevailing indifference the Pharisee stood for a strict religious life as against the scepticism and worldliness of the Sadducee. And so far as these two parties were concerned, Paul was wholly with the Pharisee and against the Sadducee.<sup>c</sup>

**touching the hope of a resurrection.** Here the same question has been raised. Was Paul quite honest in making this statement? So far as there was a specific charge against him, was it not of teaching against the Law, the Temple, and the people? (xxi. 28). His belief in the doctrine of the resurrection would account only for the hostility of the Sadducees, whereas the opposition to him came more from the Pharisaic defenders of the Law. In regard to that doctrine he was in the same case as the Christian Jews of Jerusalem, who were not molested on that account. And his own words later (xxiv. 21) may imply that he himself felt some misgiving about this utterance.<sup>d</sup> On the other hand, that he honestly felt that his belief in the resurrection was part of the charge against him is shown by his words before Agrippa (xxvi. 6-8). And Festus says (xxv. 19)

<sup>a</sup> Iverach, p. 166; Page, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> e. g. by Gilbert, p. 187.

<sup>c</sup> Barnes, p. 299; Johnston, p. 13; F. B. Meyer, p. 19; Pfleiderer, *Paulinism*, ii. 245.

<sup>d</sup> Gilbert, p. 188; Baumgarten, i. 206.

that the controversy was about 'one Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive'. If Paul felt that the root of the charge against him was his Christianity, he might well say that his teaching of the Resurrection of Christ was called in question. From the beginning it was the great theme of Apostolic witness-bearing (ii. 24). And Paul laid the same stress upon it (xiii. 30), even when addressing Gentiles (xvii. 31). The foundation of his faith was the Resurrection of Christ, through which a new principle of life was introduced into humanity; so that he could write to the Corinthians, 'If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain' (1 Cor. xv. 17).<sup>a</sup>

But, in truth, these questions are irrelevant. They are based on the assumption that Luke has recorded Paul's speech, whereas it is obvious that he has given only the barest outline of it. It is clear from ver. 9 that the Apostle had told once more the story of his conversion, as he had told it on the preceding day to the people, and as he subsequently told it to Agrippa. Luke narrates only two sentences—one which led to the collision with Ananias, the other which enlisted the support of the Pharisees. When the story of the Risen Jesus provoked expressions of scepticism from the Sadducees and counter-expressions of sympathy from the Pharisees, Paul availed himself of the divisions between them.<sup>b</sup>

8. **acknowledge both.** That is, a resurrection and the existence of angels. The Sadducees regarded the angels mentioned in the Pentateuch, which they accepted, not as separate existences, but as manifestations of the Deity.

9. **or an angel**—! The rest of the sentence was drowned in the uproar raised by the Sadducees. The words 'let us not fight against God' (A.V.) have been introduced by a copyist from Gamaliel's speech (v. 39).

10. **to go down.** Apparently Lysias with some soldiers was in a gallery overlooking the court.

## II

<sup>11</sup> And the night following the Lord stood over him and said, Be of good cheer; for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear testimony also at Rome.

11. **the night following.** This verse somewhat interrupts the

<sup>a</sup> Schaff, i. 365.

<sup>b</sup> Rendall, *Acts*; Rackham, *Acts*.

context, and is perhaps interpolated by Luke into his source (see on xviii. 9),<sup>a</sup> but need not be on that account less authentic.

On a similar occasion the entire Church of Jerusalem had watched and prayed for Peter (xii. 5), but we hear of no such intercessions now on behalf of Paul (see on xxi. 18).<sup>b</sup>

Visions such as this came to Paul at other crises of his career (see on xviii. 9). Now, after two days of danger and excitement, the reaction which comes even to the holiest had come to him, and God seemed to have deserted His servant. The result of his two last speeches had dispelled any lingering hope of winning his countrymen for Christ. Alone, and without sympathy from those who should have given it, he looked forward with dread to the uncertain future. Did life or death lie before him? More work for his Master, or silence for ever in this world? The words of the Lord show what his thoughts had been. To his cry of despondency came the answer, 'Be of good cheer': to his misgivings as to his action before the Council came the verdict of Divine approval, 'As thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem': to his fear that his long-cherished hope of seeing Rome (xix. 21; Rom. i. 13) must now be frustrated came another 'must' from the Divine lips, assuring him of its fulfilment. Better this vision to such a man as Paul than even the opening of the prison at Philippi by an earthquake. The Divine voice not only approved the past, 'as thou hast testified,' and lightened the present, 'Be of good cheer,' but pointed to a future, 'so must thou bear testimony.'<sup>c</sup> He had the reward which he valued most—faithful work acknowledged by the promise of more work—and the assurance, not that his troubles should cease, but that his witness-bearing should continue.

**so must thou.** When this announcement was made, he was a prisoner in the hands of enemies, with no powerful friends to champion him. But, while man proposes, God disposes. Enemies and strangers concur to bring about the Divine purpose. Various agencies are pressed into service. The implacable enmity of the Jewish leaders, the impartial justice of Roman law, the plot of assassins, the love of a nephew, the transference to Caesarea, the avarice which led the corrupt Felix to leave him for two years in bonds, the hesitation of Festus to act with justice, the consequent necessity in self-defence of appeal to the Emperor—all these things conspired to bring the great design to its consummation.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 142.

<sup>b</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, p. 376.

<sup>c</sup> Haweis, p. 196.

<sup>d</sup> Arnot, p. 470; Gurney, p. 287.

<sup>12</sup> And when it was day, the Jews banded together and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. <sup>13</sup> And they were more than forty who made this conspiracy. <sup>14</sup> And they came to the chief priests and elders and said, We have bound ourselves under a solemn curse to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. <sup>15</sup> Now therefore do ye with the Council signify to the tribune that he bring him down to you, as though ye would judge of his case more exactly : and we, before he come near, are ready to slay him. <sup>16</sup> But Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, and presenting himself at the barracks he went in and told Paul. <sup>17</sup> And Paul called to him one of the centurions and said, Take this young man to the tribune, for he hath something to tell him. <sup>18</sup> So he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, The prisoner Paul called me to him and asked me to bring to thee this young man, who hath something to say to thee. <sup>19</sup> And the tribune took him by the arm, and going aside asked him privately, What is that thou hast to tell me ? <sup>20</sup> And he said, The Jews have agreed to ask thee to bring down Paul to-morrow to the Council, in the hope of learning somewhat more exactly concerning him. <sup>21</sup> Do not thou therefore yield to them ; for there lie in wait for him more than forty of them, who have bound themselves under a curse neither to eat nor to drink till they have slain him : and now are they ready, looking for the promise from thee. <sup>22</sup> So the tribune let the young man go, charging him, Tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me.

12. the Jews. They doubtless belonged to the sect of the Zealots,

who held that to kill God's enemies was pleasing to God. But since Luke calls them simply 'Jews', and records no demur on the part of the Jewish leaders to the murderous plan, it is clear that he wishes to convey that the people and their rulers alike rejected the offer of the Gospel.<sup>a</sup>

**neither eat nor drink.** Just such a reckless anathema as that of Saul, which nearly led to the death of Jonathan (1 Sam. xiv. 24). We are not told what happened when their vow was not accomplished, but the subtlety of the Jewish doctors would be equal to finding a reason for declaring it void.<sup>b</sup>

**14. the chief priests and elders.** Their acquiescence throws a lurid light upon the moral corruption of the time. These Zealots were going to commit a horrible crime, but they claimed the sanction of their religion, and obtained from their religious leaders, not only this, but a promise of co-operation. So Christ had foretold (John xvi. 2), 'Whoso killeth you will think that he doeth God service.' The men who had not scrupled to accept the offer of Judas to betray the Master felt no hesitation in accepting this proposal for the murder of the servant.<sup>c</sup>

**16. Paul's sister's son.** We know no more of him than is here told. He may have been sent, like his uncle, to Jerusalem to study under some distinguished Rabbi, and have heard of the plot from a fellow-student. A secret known to so many, in a city where the popular sentiment was strongly with them, might easily leak out. Or possibly some one, to whom the plot was disclosed, either from interest in Paul or from abhorrence of the crime, gave information to Paul's relative. That his nephew sought to save his life is not enough to prove that his sister was a Christian. The words (Phil. iii. 8), 'For whom I suffered the loss of all things,' receive a natural interpretation if Paul had been disowned by his family. At any rate, the nephew had his uncle's courage, since he ran the risk of death at the hands of the conspirators if it became known that he had divulged their secret.<sup>d</sup>

**he went in.** The permission to see friends is said later (xxiv. 23) to be an indulgence. Lysias may have granted the permission as some atonement for having 'bound' a Roman citizen.

<sup>a</sup> Maurice, p. 332; Baumgarten, iii. 47.

<sup>b</sup> Pressensé, p. 369; Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> J. Robertson, p. 292; Benson, p. 567; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 401.

<sup>d</sup> Gilbert, p. 190; Kitto, p. 430; Weinell, p. 177; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 36; F. B. Meyer, p. 150.



17. **Paul called.** His trust in the Divine promise did not lead him to intermit his own efforts to provide for his safety. He laid his plans as skilfully and energetically as though all depended on his own judgment and promptitude (see on xxvii. 24 and 33). It is not faith, but presumption, which denies the need of the co-operation of the human agency, if the promises of God are to be fulfilled.<sup>a</sup>

22. **Tell no man.** There was no need to warn him of the risk which he ran by playing the informer. But the tribune feared that the Jews, if they learnt that their plot was known, would form some other combination. Against this one he could now guard.

## 23-30

<sup>23</sup> And he called to him two of the centurions and said, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go as far as Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred lancers, at the third hour of the night: <sup>24</sup> and he bade them provide beasts that they might set Paul thereon and bring him safe to Felix the governor. <sup>25</sup> And he wrote a letter after this form:—<sup>26</sup> Claudius Lysias to his Excellency Felix, greeting. <sup>27</sup> This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, when I came upon them with the soldiery and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. <sup>28</sup> And desiring to know the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him down into their Council; <sup>29</sup> and found him to be accused about questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge deserving of death or imprisonment. <sup>30</sup> But when it was shown to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to thee forthwith, charging his accusers also to speak against him before thee.

23. **And he called.** The tribune was responsible not only for the life of his prisoner but for good order in the city, and he determined to send Paul to the Procurator.

<sup>a</sup> Arnot, p. 466; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 407.

**at the third hour.** When it would be dark and the streets deserted.<sup>a</sup> The accuracy of Luke's figures—nearly five hundred men—has been questioned; and they are certainly startling. But the tribune had been unable to discover what Paul's offence was. It evidently stirred the Jews to fury; and the large number of the conspirators made him fear the possibility of a popular rising.

**24. provide beasts.** The distance was seventy miles, so that a change of horses was necessary.

**Felix.** A Greek slave, he had through the influence of his brother Pallas, who was a favourite of the Emperor Claudius, been given the Procuratorship of Judaea. He was one of the vilest men of this dark age. Tacitus has summed up his character<sup>b</sup> in the bitter epigram, 'A king in power, with the spirit of a slave.' In the hope of winning the national support to his position in Judaea, he had married a daughter of Herod Agrippa.<sup>c</sup>

**25. a letter.** The dexterous mixture of truth and falsehood proves its genuineness.<sup>d</sup>

**27. This man.** The Greek word implies respect. It is clear that Lysias, like others who came into contact with Paul, had been impressed by his personality.

**having learned.** He states two facts which were true, but he puts them into a combination which was false. He had rescued Paul and he had learnt that he was a Roman; but the former fact preceded the latter and was not the consequence of it.<sup>e</sup> And he discreetly says nothing of the proposed scourging.

**29. nothing laid to his charge.** Much of the lenient treatment with which Paul afterwards met may have been due to this favourable report.<sup>f</sup>

### 31-35

<sup>31</sup> So the soldiers, as it had been commanded them, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.

<sup>32</sup> But on the morrow they left the horsemen to go on with him and returned to the barracks. <sup>33</sup> And they, when they were come to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, presented Paul also before

<sup>a</sup> Farrar, ii. 333.

<sup>c</sup> Thomas, *Acts*, p. 411; Bungener, p. 321.

<sup>e</sup> Howson, *Scenes*, p. 113.

<sup>b</sup> *Hist.* v. 9.

<sup>d</sup> Farrar, ii. 333.

<sup>f</sup> Lewin, ii. 155.

him. <sup>34</sup> And when he had read it and inquired of what province he was and learnt that he was of Cilicia, <sup>35</sup> I will hear thee fully, said he, when thine accusers also are come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's palace.

**32. returned to the barracks.** After Antipatris the road emerged from the defiles on an open plain. Paul was now at a safe distance from Jerusalem, and the rest of the journey would be by daylight.<sup>a</sup>

**33. to Caesarea** Philip and the Christians there must have been startled at this speedy fulfilment of Agabus' prediction. Less than a fortnight had elapsed since it was uttered, and Paul was in charge of Gentile soldiers.<sup>b</sup>

**34. of what province.** Felix had been told that he was a Roman citizen, and naturally wished to learn more about him. The inquiry was not made to ascertain whether he had jurisdiction: the fact that Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem gave him that.

**35. in Herod's palace.** Used at this time as the official residence of the Procurator.

The narrative of the week which followed Paul's arrest is fuller than that of any like period in the New Testament, except the week of the Lord's Passion. Luke, who wrote both narratives, seems to have been conscious of a parallelism between them. Both Jesus and Paul journey to Jerusalem for a Feast: both are aware that a crisis is impending: both are greeted by the Jewish crowd with the cry, 'Away with him': both are tried before the Council and struck on the mouth: both are delivered up to the Gentiles: both are accused before a Roman governor who wishes to save them: both stand before a King Herod: both are pronounced to have done nothing deserving of death but are not therefore released.<sup>c</sup>

## CHAPTER XXIV

### I-9

<sup>1</sup> And after five days the high priest Ananias went down with certain elders and a pleader, one Tertullus;

<sup>a</sup> Rendall, *Acts*.

<sup>b</sup> Farrar, ii. 335; J. Robertson, p. 295.

<sup>c</sup> Rackham, *Acts*, p. 404 seq.; Johnston, p. 151.

and informed the governor against Paul. <sup>2</sup> And when he was called, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, That by thee, your Excellency, we enjoy much peace, and that by thy foresight matters are ordered rightly for this nation <sup>3</sup> everywhere and in every way, we acknowledge with all thankfulness. <sup>4</sup> But, that I may not be tedious to thee, I pray thee to hear us of thy clemency a few words. <sup>5</sup> For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of insurrection among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes; <sup>6</sup> who even sought to profane the temple; on whom also we laid hold; <sup>8</sup> from whom thou wilt be able, by examining him thyself, to obtain certain knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him. <sup>9</sup> And the Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that these things were so.

**1. after five days.** Since, that is, Paul had been despatched from Jerusalem. He left on the ninth day after his arrival, and this was the thirteenth (ver. 11). We may imagine the calm contempt with which Lysias told the Jews, when they came with their request for a further hearing of the case, that Paul was at Caesarea and that they must carry their accusation thither.<sup>a</sup> In their angry disappointment they must have started almost instantly.

**Ananias.** They left no stone unturned to gain their end. The high-priest, with the 'whitewashed wall' rankling in his memory, went in person; and they engaged a skilled advocate to state their case. They had already experienced Paul's powers in debate.

**Tertullus.** His name is Roman, and he was evidently one of those lawyers who practised in the provincial courts. The proceedings were probably conducted in Greek, but ignorance of the forms of Roman law made professional assistance necessary.

**informed the governor.** They appear to have applied for an audience immediately on their arrival.

**2. we enjoy much peace.** Clearly we have only a summary of his speech. But Luke gives the tactful preface, in which Tertullus selected the one point on which it was possible to commend the

<sup>a</sup> Symington, p. 227.

infamous Felix, who had been sent to Judaea to suppress a serious outbreak and had done it successfully. And the allusion was all the more adroit, because Tertullus was about to charge Paul with being a disturber of the peace.

The contrast between the fullness with which the opening words of Tertullus are recorded and the brevity with which his subsequent statement of the charges against Paul is given may point <sup>a</sup> to the presence of Luke himself, who began by reproducing the exact words of the speaker and then, as the case advanced, contented himself with jotting down a brief summary of what he heard ; so that what he gives here may be a transcript of actual notes taken at the time.

4. **may not be tedious.** The gross compliments culminate in the suggestion that they must be distasteful to so modest a man.<sup>b</sup>

5. **we have found this man.** The first charge was an offence against Roman law. Paul was 'a mover of insurrection'. It would not be difficult to find plausible evidence to support it. His appearance had been, Tertullus might urge, the signal for disturbance wherever he went. Plotted against at Damascus, plotted against at Jerusalem, expelled from Pisidian Antioch, stoned at Lystra, scourged and imprisoned at Philippi, accused of treason at Thessalonica, haled before the Proconsul at Corinth, cause of a serious riot at Ephesus, and now finally of a riot at Jerusalem—was he not 'a mover of insurrection'? But though put in the forefront as the charge which would at once attract the attention of a Roman magistrate, it was not the policy of the Jews to prove it by specific evidence. Their design was to get the Procurator to remit the case back to the Sanhedrin as one which properly belonged to its jurisdiction. Hence Tertullus passed to two other charges with which a Roman court had nothing to do—an accusation of heresy and of profanation of the Temple.<sup>c</sup>

**a pestilent fellow.** It is instructive to see how the noblest man then living, whose name is now revered throughout the world, could be described by a contemporary as 'a pestilent fellow', and the great Apostle of Christianity as 'a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes'.<sup>d</sup>

**the Nazarenes.** This name, derived from the common description of our Lord as 'Jesus of Nazareth', is still used of Christians by Mohammedans. They would naturally have been called 'Galileans',

<sup>a</sup> Chase, p. 111.

<sup>b</sup> A. Robertson, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Tertullus.

<sup>c</sup> Buss, p. 381; J. Robertson, p. 299; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 412.

<sup>d</sup> Stanley, p. 174.



but that name was appropriated already to the followers of Judas of Galilee.<sup>a</sup>

6. **we laid hold.** The A.V. has an addition after these words, 'and would have judged according to our law. But the tribune Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come unto thee.' The words are probably genuine, and were omitted on account of their discrepancy from the previous account (xxiii. 27). They are a gross misrepresentation of the facts, the motive being to prejudice Felix against Lysias, and destroy the value of any testimony which he might give in favour of Paul. The Jews wished to persuade the Procurator to remit Paul's case to the Sanhedrin. His offences, they urged, were not such as Roman law took cognizance of. Let him therefore be handed over to the Jewish tribunal which would already have dealt with him, if Lysias had not violently removed him from the Council when he was actually arraigned before it.<sup>b</sup>

9. **affirming that these things were so.** They called no witnesses, since their object was not to have sentence passed by Felix, but merely corroborated the speech of their counsel by strong assertions. But the court was not the Sanhedrin, where assertions might take the place of evidence. Felix saw that it would be a mockery of justice to hand over the prisoner to a tribunal where these angry fanatics would sit as judges. And the anxiety of Jews to suppress insurrection against Rome was in itself suspicious. All the same, he might have acceded to their demand, as a cheap method of ingratiating himself, if Paul had not been a Roman citizen, and if Lysias' despatch had not represented the matter in a very different light.<sup>c</sup>

## 10-21

<sup>10</sup> And Paul, when the governor had signed to him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been many years a judge to this nation, I do cheerfully make my defence; <sup>11</sup> seeing that thou canst ascertain that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem. <sup>12</sup> And neither in the temple did

<sup>a</sup> *Church Quarterly*, cxx, July; Benson, p. 580.

<sup>b</sup> Morrison, p. 125; J. Robertson, p. 299; Fraser, p. 204.

<sup>c</sup> Fraser, p. 205; Maclaren, ii. 282; Bungeener, p. 323; J. Robertson, p. 299.

they find me disputing with any man, nor stirring up a crowd either in the synagogue or about the city ;<sup>13</sup> nor can they prove to thee the things whereof they now accuse me. <sup>14</sup> But this I confess to thee, that after the way which they call a sect so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the Law and which are written in the prophets ; <sup>15</sup> having hope toward God, which these men themselves also look for, that there shall be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>16</sup> Meanwhile I for my part train myself to have alway a conscience void of offence toward God and men. <sup>17</sup> Now after an absence of many years I came to bring alms to my nation and offerings : <sup>18</sup> and while I was so busied they found me purified in the temple, with no crowd nor yet with tumult : but there were certain Jews from Asia—<sup>19</sup> who ought to have been here before thee and to have made accusation, if they had aught against me. <sup>20</sup> Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the Council, <sup>21</sup> except it be for this one utterance which I made standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am on my trial before you this day.

10. **Forasmuch as.** Tertullus had begun with flattery ; Paul begins with respect. If the character of the judge was disreputable, his office was honourable. And it was true that Felix had had so long an experience of Palestine as to enable him to see through Tertullus' rhetoric. Before his appointment as Procurator he had, according to Tacitus,<sup>a</sup> served as Prefect in Samaria under his predecessor, Cumanus ; and through the influence of his brother Pallas his tenure of the Procuratorship had been extended beyond the usual period. Consequently Paul could feel that he was addressing one who was no novice in Jewish affairs, but possessed an unusual knowledge of the men with whom he had to deal.

<sup>a</sup> *Ann.* xii, 54.

His speech is singularly calm and dignified. He had just been called 'a pestilent fellow', but there is no resentment in his reply. Nor does he say one word of the murderous assault upon him in the Temple, or of the later plot to assassinate him. He does not even urge the plea, which might have appealed to a Roman, that the hostility of his countrymen was due to the fact that he did not share their narrow exclusiveness.<sup>a</sup> He pleads as a Jew on Jewish grounds. His defence may be summed up thus:—The charge of criminal conduct is not true; the other charges are true, but involve no criminality.

**15. these men.** The Sadducee Ananias must have chafed at this statement that all orthodox Israelites believed in a resurrection.<sup>b</sup>

**of both the righteous and the unrighteous.** Gardner thinks <sup>c</sup> that these words must be due to Luke, since they give an incorrect view of the Pauline doctrine of the resurrection. He holds that 1 Thess. iv and 1 Cor. xv show that to Paul the future life was absolutely bound up with being 'in Christ'.

**16. a conscience void of offence.** The Greek word is Pauline, being found in the New Testament only here and in 1 Cor. x. 32 and Phil. i. 10. Again, it must have been gall and wormwood to Ananias to stand there and hear the very words repeated, for uttering which a few days before he had commanded Paul to be smitten on the mouth.<sup>d</sup>

**17. alms.** This is the one direct mention in the Acts of the Collection which holds so prominent a place in Paul's letters. It is a warning not to found arguments on Luke's silence.

**offerings.** The next verse shows that the offerings in connexion with the Nazirites are meant. But since Paul had not come to Jerusalem with the object of bearing their charges, it looks as though he had had some vow of his own to fulfil.<sup>e</sup> If so, this would make the suggestion of the Elders (xxi. 24) more reasonable.<sup>f</sup>

**19. who ought to have been here.** This was alone enough to make the condemnation of a Roman citizen in a Roman court impossible. The accusers who were present had not witnessed the alleged offence: those who could have given evidence at first-hand were not present.<sup>g</sup>

**21. except.** What a comment is this exception on his assertion

<sup>a</sup> Maurice, p. 333.

<sup>c</sup> p. 406. See also McGiffert, p. 351.

<sup>e</sup> Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, p. 109.

<sup>g</sup> Fraser, p. 207.

<sup>b</sup> Fraser, p. 213.

<sup>d</sup> Fraser, p. 212.

<sup>f</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

that he had trained himself to have 'a conscience void of offence' ! To a less sensitive conscience his action before the Sanhedrin would have seemed venial enough.<sup>a</sup>

## 22-23

<sup>22</sup> But Felix, having more exact knowledge of the Way, adjourned the hearing, saying, When the tribune Lysias comes down, I will determine your matter. <sup>23</sup> And he gave order to the centurion that he should be kept in custody, but should have indulgence, and that none of his own people should be hindered from ministering to him.

**22. having more exact knowledge.** The statement has been variously understood, but the most natural meaning is that, from his long residence in Palestine and from his marriage with a Jewess, Felix' knowledge was greater than that of an ordinary governor and more than Tertullus credited him with possessing.

**adjourned the hearing.** It is usually said that, since the evidence did not sustain the charge, Felix should have acquitted the prisoner ; but that he yielded, like Pilate, to the temptation to avoid offending influential Jews, and escaped from the dilemma by adjourning the case on the ostensible ground of wishing to hear Lysias' account, while he compromised with his conscience by relaxing the severity of the imprisonment. And in favour of this view is the fact that Lysias had already declared Paul to be innocent, and was not, so far as we know, ever summoned to Caesarea ; and also Luke's statement (ver. 26) that Felix' greed was excited by Paul's mention of money. On the other hand, it may well have been the case that Paul's innocence was by no means so apparent to Felix as it is to us. He had admittedly been the occasion of a disturbance such as the Roman authorities particularly disliked ; and Lysias would be able to give evidence about the facts of the tumult—the only point which seemed to require investigation under Roman law. He may also have been genuinely anxious to secure Paul's safety. He was a Roman citizen, and the manifest hatred of the Jews made it clear that to release him on the spot would be to endanger his life.

**23. in custody.** His captivity was not rigorous, but it was not

<sup>a</sup> Benson, p. 585.

the merely nominal imprisonment known as 'free custody'. He was chained to a soldier (ver. 27; xxvi. 29).

**his own people.** Philip and the other Christians at Caesarea would not fail to visit him. Luke and Aristarchus were both with him when two years later he sailed for Rome, and may have been with him earlier. He is certain to have written letters to his Churches during this long captivity, and Timothy or Titus would take them and bring replies.

## 24-27

<sup>24</sup> But after certain days Felix came with Drusilla, his own wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup> And as he discoursed of righteousness and temperance and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified and answered, Go thy way for the present, but when I get a convenient opportunity I will call for thee. <sup>26</sup> At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul; wherefore also he sent for him the oftener and communed with him. <sup>27</sup> But when two years were expired, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and desiring to ingratiate himself with the Jews left Paul in prison.

**24. Felix came.** Apparently after some occasion of absence from Caesarea.

**with Drusilla.** Her family had been connected by dark incidents with Christianity. She was daughter of the murderer of James, great-niece of the murderer of the Baptist, great-granddaughter of the murderer of the Innocents. She was wife of Azizus, king of Emesa, but had been seduced by Felix.

**his own wife.** The 'own' is inserted to show the unofficial character of this interview.<sup>a</sup>

**a Jewess.** The insertion of the word suggests that the interview took place at her request. The clever Herodian family seem to have felt a strange interest in Christianity. One Herod had listened gladly to the Baptist (Mark vi. 20); another was eager to see Jesus (Luke xxiii. 8).<sup>b</sup> And now Paul was not called upon to make any defence :

<sup>a</sup> Rendall, *Expositor*, III. viii. 211.

<sup>b</sup> Stokes, ii. 447.



he was to plead, not for himself, but for his Master—for 'the faith in Christ Jesus'.

**25. of righteousness.** Apparently he said nothing of Christ. Christianity is morality before it is theology. He took common ground with his hearers, speaking of broad moral truths accepted by Gentiles as well as by Jews. And doubtless, with his unfailing tact, he dealt with them in the abstract. He was too courteous for personalities. None the less, he showed his usual courage. He knew that Felix held his life in his hand, and that the resentment of Drusilla was more to be feared than that of the Procurator. It was Herodias, not Herod, who had demanded the head of the Baptist. Yet to the Roman libertine and to the profligate Jewess he calmly discoursed on 'righteousness and temperance and the judgment to come'.

**was terrified.** He had expected to gratify an idle curiosity: he found himself in the presence of a man who, speaking without fear or favour, roused his conscience.<sup>a</sup>

**a convenient opportunity.** It is often said that Felix never found this convenient opportunity. It is more instructive to mark that, on the contrary, he had many subsequent opportunities (ver. 26), but a covetous motive vitiated them. That is the real lesson.<sup>b</sup>

**26. he hoped that money.** Under Roman law a magistrate accepting a bribe was liable to punishment by exile and confiscation; but at this corrupt period it was a common practice. Felix had heard that Paul had brought alms to the poor and also paid the charges of the four Nazirites. But, apart from this, neither he nor Festus nor Agrippa treated Paul as an obscure Jew of no social importance. The fact that on his missionary travels he was often without funds need not imply that he was without resources at Tarsus and Jerusalem. And no doubt he could easily have obtained money from his friends, and by a bribe secured his liberty and new opportunities of missionary work. But he would not do evil that good might come.<sup>c</sup> Josephus represents<sup>d</sup> Felix as greedy for money.

**27. Festus.** We know nothing of him apart from the Acts and Josephus. He was evidently a far worthier and more honourable man than Felix. His appointment was probably in A.D. 60, and so we have here one of the few data for fixing the chronology of the Acts.

<sup>a</sup> Iverach, p. 174.

<sup>b</sup> Fraser, p. 218.

<sup>c</sup> Buss, p. 389; Johnston, p. 155; Howson, *Scenes*, p. 115.

<sup>d</sup> *Antiq.* xx. 8, 9; ix. 2.

**desiring to ingratiate himself.** History supplies the explanation. During Paul's imprisonment an open fight broke out between Jews and Gentiles in the market-place of Caesarea: Felix let loose his soldiers on the mob, and they killed many. The result was the impeachment of Felix by the Jews, and he was recalled to Rome to answer the charge. Claudius was dead, Pallas had lost his position of influence, and the Jews had a powerful friend at court in the person of the Jewess Poppaea. Hence Felix was eager to conciliate them. To leave Paul in prison might propitiate them, whereas to release him was certain to exasperate them further. So he left him bound, careless of the fact that by so doing he gave to his successor the impression that Paul was a criminal.<sup>a</sup>

There is some ground for thinking that 2 Tim. iv. 9-22 may have been written at this time from Caesarea, and have been later incorporated with other fragments of Paul's letters. He there says that he had recently come from Corinth by way of Troas, and he wishes to have the cloak which he left with Carpus brought to him before winter. Thus death was not immediately impending, as in the earlier part of the letter (iv. 6). Moreover he had left Trophimus at Miletus. Tychicus had been with him, but had been sent back to Ephesus. All these features suit the journey from Corinth to Caesarea described in the Acts. The only difficulty is the remark (xxi. 29) that the Jews had seen Trophimus with Paul in Jerusalem, and that is a parenthetical statement by Luke, who may have been mistaken in the name. Further, the allusion to Alexander the coppersmith (2 Tim. iv. 14) who did him 'much evil' will agree with the statement (xxi. 27) that 'the Jews from Asia' stirred up the multitude against him: and the words 'But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me' (2 Tim. iv. 17) agree with xxiii. 11, 'The Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer'; while 'At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me' harmonizes with the account in the Acts of his friendlessness among the Jews.<sup>b</sup>

It is thought by some that Luke's Gospel may have been written during these two years. The time was adequate for its composition; the 'eyewitnesses and ministers of the word' (Luke i. 2) could be found nowhere so easily as in Palestine; and Paul, who must often have felt the inconvenience of having only oral accounts of the Lord's life to give to his converts, might gladly have encouraged the idea. But though Luke may have gathered materials for his Gospel in the

<sup>a</sup> Fouard, *Paul*, p. 388; Iverach, p. 175.

<sup>b</sup> Bacon, p. 196 seq.

course of this visit to Palestine, the narrative here is apparently not part of the 'we' source. The author seems to know no details of these two years, relating nothing except in connexion with Paul's trial.<sup>a</sup>

But in another way these two years were fruitful. No doubt Paul felt the loss of time for active ministry and longed to re-visit his Churches. It must have seemed a mysterious providence which condemned him to such inactivity. Yet we can see a reason for it. He had long been over-taxing his strength. After twenty years of incessant missionary work he required leisure to garner the harvest of experience. None can tell how much the world owes to the enforced solitude of its great leaders. This was the Patmos of Paul's busy life—a precious season for turning his eyes inward and fostering the work of grace there. The result is seen when we compare the letters written before and after—those, say, to the Thessalonians and Corinthians with those to the Ephesians and Colossians. The spiritual advance is easily discernible in the mellower tone and profounder teaching. There is less polemic, and more of the Christian's vital union with his Lord: less doctrinal discussion, and more absorption in His Person.<sup>b</sup>

## CHAPTER XXV

### I-5

<sup>1</sup> So Festus, having entered on the government of the province, went up after three days from Caesarea to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> And the chief priests and the leading men among the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, <sup>3</sup> asking as a favour to Paul's prejudice that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait to kill him on the way. <sup>4</sup> Festus, however, answered that Paul was in custody at Caesarea; but that he was himself about to depart thither shortly. <sup>5</sup> Let them therefore, said he, which are in authority among you go down with me; and, if there be anything amiss in the man, let them accuse him.

<sup>a</sup> Morrison, p. 4; Baring-Gould, p. 404; Weizsäcker, ii. 119.

<sup>b</sup> Fraser, p. 216; Purves, p. 234; Macduff, *Paul*, p. 333; Stalker, p. 215; F. B. Meyer, p. 151.

2. **the chief priests.** The high-priest was no longer Ananias, but Ishmael, who had been recently appointed by Agrippa. This renewal of the charge after two years, on the very first opportunity, is a measure, not only of their unsleeping hatred, but of the importance which they attached to Paul's influence.

3. **laying wait to kill him.** Two years before the Jewish authorities had sanctioned the plot of certain zealots to assassinate him. Now they adopt the plan themselves.

4. **Festus, however, answered.** Their plea had probably been that it was easier for one man to be brought to Jerusalem than for many to travel to Caesarea. But Festus suspected something from their importunity (cf. ver. 24, 'all the multitude'), and his 'if' (ver. 5) implies some doubt in his mind whether there was any case against Paul. At any rate, Caesarea was the seat of Roman government; the man was already there; and, as he was himself shortly going thither, he saw no reason for shifting the *venue*.

## 6-12

<sup>6</sup> And after a stay among them of not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea; and on the morrow seating himself on the judgment-seat he commanded Paul to be brought in. <sup>7</sup> And when he was come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood round him, bringing against him many grave charges which they could not prove: <sup>8</sup> while Paul said in his defence, Neither against the law of the Jews nor against the temple nor against Caesar have I committed any offence whatever. <sup>9</sup> But Festus, willing to gain favour with the Jews, answered Paul and said, Art thou willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged of these things before me? <sup>10</sup> But Paul said, I am standing at Caesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to Jews have I done no wrong, as thou too very well seest. <sup>11</sup> If, then, I am a wrongdoer, and have committed any offence deserving of death, I am ready to die: but if none of these things be true, whereof these men accuse me, no man can give me up to them as a favour. I

appeal to Caesar. <sup>12</sup> Then Festus, when he had conferred with his assessors, answered, Thou hast appealed to Caesar : to Caesar thou shalt go.

7. **stood round him.** This time the Jews conducted their own case, apparently in an irregular manner, seeking to influence the Procurator by their vehemence, and producing no more evidence than on the previous occasion.<sup>a</sup> But Paul's defence shows that their accusations were the same as had been urged by Tertullus ; and, indeed, they were probably on the court record as the charges against him.

8. **Caesar.** Since 'King', as a title for the Emperor, established itself in the East from the time of Domitian (A.D. 81-96), an inference as to the early date of the Acts may be deduced from the fact that it employs only 'Caesar' and 'Augustus'.<sup>b</sup>

9. **willing to gain favour.** He naturally did not wish to begin his term of office, as Felix had ended his, with a quarrel with the leading Jews. They, seeing the failure of their case, seem to have again urged that the *venue* should be changed to Jerusalem, and their unanimity impressed him. As a new governor, without the long experience of Felix, he was honestly perplexed. He was surprised to find that the charges against Paul were not, as he had supposed (ver. 18), against Roman law, but against Jewish law of which he knew nothing. He therefore proposed, not that he himself should try the case at Jerusalem—in that case he would not have asked the prisoner's consent—but that the Sanhedrin should try it in his presence. Probably he did not appreciate, as Paul did, the danger of such a course.<sup>c</sup>

10. **I am standing.** The Procurator was Caesar's representative. Paul was a prisoner of the Romans, not of the Jews. If Festus was not prepared to find him guilty, he could not hand him over to an inferior jurisdiction.<sup>d</sup>

11. **no man can.** The very form of the governor's question, 'Art thou willing,' implied that there was no legal power to remand him, against his will, to Jerusalem.<sup>e</sup>

**I appeal.** Paul had waited two years for the decision of his case. He had perhaps hoped much from the advent of a new governor. Now he found that Festus, a just man, who admitted his innocence

<sup>a</sup> Buss, p. 393.

<sup>b</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 36.

<sup>c</sup> Barnes, p. 356 ; Johnston, p. 157 ; W. O. Burrows, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Appeal.

<sup>d</sup> Bungener, p. 352.

<sup>e</sup> Eadie, p. 407.



of any offence against Roman law, was proposing to hand the case over to the Jews. Indignant at being again made a tool to serve the policy of the Roman governors in their relations with the Jews, he took a decisive step. Previous experience had taught him to expect a favourable verdict from a Roman tribunal, where Jewish influence had no power. And he felt all the more confidence in an Emperor who had recently removed Felix for unjust conduct and replaced him by an upright man.<sup>a</sup>

But that he made this appeal with reluctance is clear from his words (xxviii. 19), 'I was *constrained* to appeal.' It was the complete assertion of his Roman citizenship, and the final repudiation of the Jewish authorities.<sup>b</sup> Perhaps, as he spoke the words, he saw for the first time that they opened the door for his long-desired visit to Rome. But it is absurd to think that the appeal was made to secure that object. If he had been acquitted, he could have gone thither as a free man ; and he certainly would not have incurred the expense and delay and risks of an appeal, so long as he had a reasonable prospect of acquittal.<sup>c</sup>

12. **assessors.** Leading provincials acted as assessors to the provincial governors. Their short term of office left them little time to gather experience, and local advisers were a necessity. The exercise of a Roman citizen's right of appeal was subject to some discretion on the part of the judge.

**Thou hast appealed.** The curttness of speech betrays the annoyance of Festus at this unexpected step on Paul's part. He had not meant to be unjust ; and now, in the very first case after his entry on office, his judgment was appealed against. And he was placed in an awkward position. He had not acquitted a man whom he believed to be innocent of any offence against Roman law, and yet had to formulate charges against him which he did not understand.<sup>d</sup>

## 13-22

13 And after some days were passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and saluted Festus.

14 And as they were spending several days there, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, There is a certain man left prisoner by Felix ; 15 about whom, when

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 312 ; Bungener, p. 353 ; Rackham, *Acts* ; Pressensé, p. 162.

<sup>b</sup> Rackham, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 429 ; McGiffert, p. 354.

<sup>d</sup> Fraser, p. 223 ; Buss, p. 394.

I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, asking for sentence against him. <sup>16</sup> To whom I answered, that it is not the custom of Romans to give up any man as a favour, before the accused have the accusers face to face, and have opportunity of defence concerning the charge against him. <sup>17</sup> When therefore they were come together here, I made no delay, but on the next day sat on the judgment-seat and commanded the man to be brought in. <sup>18</sup> Concerning whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation of such evil deeds as I supposed; <sup>19</sup> but had certain questions against him of their own religion, and of one Jesus, a dead man, whom Paul asserted to be alive. <sup>20</sup> And I, being perplexed as to the inquiry about such things, said that, if he would, he should go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these matters. <sup>21</sup> But when Paul appealed to be kept for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. <sup>22</sup> And Agrippa said to Festus, I was wishing even of myself to hear the man. To-morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

**13. King Agrippa.** Herod Agrippa II had lived all his youth in Rome at the Court of Claudius, with whom he was a favourite. Being only seventeen at his father's death, he was considered too young to succeed him as king over so turbulent a people, and a Procurator was sent to Judaea. But he was given the small kingdom of Chalcis, to which five years later the tetrarchies held by Philip and Lysanias (Luke iii. 1) were added. As Judaea was still under a Procurator, Luke rightly styles him 'king', and not 'king of the Jews.'<sup>a</sup> He was a clever, well-bred man, but worldly and dissolute. After the fall of Jerusalem he lived at Rome and died there the last of his race.

**Bernice.** One of the vilest women known to history. A bare recital of the facts of her life is more eloquent than any comment. A noted beauty, like her sister Drusilla, she was married first to Marcus, Alabarch of the Jews at Alexandria. At his death, when

<sup>a</sup> Eadie, p. 408.

she was still but twenty, she went to live with her brother Agrippa, gossip said,<sup>a</sup> as his incestuous mistress. As a refuge from the scandal so caused, she married Polemon, King of Cilicia, but soon deserted him and returned to her brother. This was shortly before their visit to Festus. She was afterwards mistress first of Vespasian, and then of his son Titus.<sup>b</sup>

This was the profligate pair before whom the noblest of living men was now to appear. It was necessary to describe them, if the dramatic contrast between prisoner and judge was to be realized, and the full significance of Paul's courtesy and earnestness grasped.<sup>c</sup>

**16. not the custom of Romans.** A touch of disdainful dignity. Not the custom of Romans, however it may be with Jews.<sup>d</sup> The allusion cannot be to the request of the Jews (ver. 3) that Paul might be brought to Jerusalem, since he would then have had his 'accusers face to face', but must be to some demand (cf. ver. 24) that Festus should condemn him in his absence. When he refused that, they made the request of ver. 3.<sup>e</sup>

**19. their own religion.** The translation 'superstition' (A. V.) is unfortunate. Festus would not have used so offensive a term to the Jew Agrippa. At the same time, his expression 'their own religion' shows that Agrippa was accustomed to speak among Gentiles of his religion in the tone of a man of the world.<sup>f</sup>

The absence of all reference to the other charge which Tertullus had alleged—that Paul was 'a mover of insurrection'—and which the Romans would certainly not regard as trivial, implies that in Festus' opinion Paul's defence had disposed of it satisfactorily.

**of one Jesus.** It is suggestive that Festus had got hold of the central doctrine of Christianity. It proves that Luke has given a greatly condensed narrative of Paul's speeches.<sup>g</sup>

**20. being perplexed.** This is not the reason assigned above (ver. 9) for the proposal that Paul should go to Jerusalem; but it may have been one of the motives. Luke, however, is not likely to have had any detailed report of a private conversation between Festus and Agrippa.

**22. I was wishing.** Agrippa had doubtless heard much of Paul from the Jews during the last two years, and his family always showed a peculiar interest in Christianity (see on xxiv. 24).

**thou shalt hear him.** No obligation lay on Paul to fall in with

<sup>a</sup> Juvenal, vi. 156.

<sup>b</sup> Buss, p. 262 seq.

<sup>c</sup> Vaughan, iii. 288.

<sup>d</sup> A. Robertson, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Festus.

<sup>e</sup> Hackett, *Acts*.

<sup>f</sup> Plumptre, *Acts*; Farrar, ii. 352.

<sup>g</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 425.

this arrangement ; but Festus had found him to be a reasonable and courteous man and assumed his consent.<sup>a</sup>

## 23-27

<sup>23</sup> So on the morrow, when Agrippa was come and Bernice with great pomp, and had entered the judgment hall, with the tribunes and principal men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in. <sup>24</sup> And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all who are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews made suit to me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. <sup>25</sup> But I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death ; and as he himself appealed to Augustus, I determined to send him. <sup>26</sup> Of whom I have nothing definite to write to my lord. Wherefore I have brought him before you, and specially before thee, King Agrippa, that, after examination had, I may have somewhat to write. <sup>27</sup> For it seemeth to me absurd, in sending a prisoner, not at the same time to notify the charges against him.

**23. on the morrow.** This was not a new trial—Agrippa had no jurisdiction, and Festus' jurisdiction had been ended by the appeal—but was of the nature of an audience, at which the chief personages of the city were invited to be present.

**with great pomp.** The description of the imposing entry, the notice of Paul's gesture in stretching forth his manacled hand (ver. 29), and the standing up of the court (ver. 30) point to the eye-witness.<sup>b</sup> The 'great pomp' was characteristic of the Herods, who were all fond of display. It was in this very city that the doom had fallen upon Agrippa's father amid a scene of pomp and magnificence (xii. 21 seq.).

**the tribunes.** There were three legions quartered at Caesarea.<sup>c</sup>

**25. I found.** It does not seem to have occurred to Festus that by this admission he was condemning himself for not having set his prisoner free. His words may have been the first clear intimation to Paul that the Procurator was convinced of his innocence.

<sup>a</sup> Buss, p. 401.

<sup>b</sup> M. Jones, p. 239.

<sup>c</sup> Benson, p. 599.

26. **nothing definite.** Festus had been able to discover no evidence of any offence on the part of the prisoner against Roman law, and his ignorance of Judaism made it difficult for him to formulate the alleged offences against Jewish law.<sup>a</sup>

**to my lord.** A touch of accuracy. Augustus and Tiberius had both refused to accept this title, but Caligula and his successors permitted its use.<sup>b</sup>

**Wherefore.** With the scrupulous regard for legal forms which characterized the Romans, Festus is careful to explain that this was in no sense a fresh trial, but an examination held for his own convenience.

**pecially before thee.** Agrippa was a Jew, with a wide knowledge of Jewish customs, conversant with questions of Jewish theology, and from his official position of Superintendent of the Temple acquainted with Jewish ritual and ceremonial. Hence Festus could scarcely have found any adviser more competent, by position and knowledge, to extricate him from his dilemma.<sup>c</sup>

## CHAPTER XXVI

### I-23

<sup>1</sup> Then Agrippa said to Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth his hand and made his defence: <sup>2</sup> I think myself happy, king Agrippa, that I am to make my defence before thee this day touching all the things whereof I am accused by Jews; <sup>3</sup> seeing that thou art specially expert in all the customs and questions among Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. <sup>4</sup> My manner of life, then, from my youth, which was from the beginning among mine own nation and at Jerusalem, know all Jews; <sup>5</sup> having knowledge of me from the first, if they be willing to testify, that after the most rigid sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. <sup>6</sup> And now for the hope of the promise which God made to our fathers I stand here to be judged; <sup>7</sup> to which promise our twelve tribes, worship-

<sup>a</sup> M. Jones, p. 225.

<sup>b</sup> Buss, p. 402.

<sup>c</sup> M. Jones, p. 226.



ping earnestly night and day, hope to attain. Touching which hope I am accused by Jews, O king. <sup>8</sup> Why is it judged incredible with you, if God doth raise the dead? <sup>9</sup> I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup> Which, indeed, I did in Jerusalem; and I not only shut up many of the saints in prison, having received the authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death, I gave my vote against them. <sup>11</sup> And punishing them many a time in all the synagogues I was fain to compel them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I was pursuing them even to foreign cities. <sup>12</sup> While thus engaged, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, <sup>13</sup> at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. <sup>14</sup> And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, Saoul, Saoul, why art thou persecuting me? It is hard for thee to kick against goads. <sup>15</sup> And I said, Sir, who art thou? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou art persecuting. <sup>16</sup> But rise and stand upon thy feet; for to this end have I appeared to thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of these things in which thou hast seen me and of those in which I will appear to thee; <sup>17</sup> choosing thee out from the People and from the Gentiles, to whom I send thee, <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes, that thou mayest turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among them that have been sanctified by faith in me. <sup>19</sup> Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; <sup>20</sup> but first to them in Damascus and at Jerusalem

and through all the country of Judaea and to the Gentiles I announced that they should repent and turn to God, doing works befitting their repentance. <sup>21</sup> For this cause some Jews seized me in the temple and essayed to kill me. <sup>22</sup> Having therefore obtained the help that cometh from God I stand unto this day, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses did say should come to pass; <sup>23</sup> that the Christ was subject to suffering, and that he first by a resurrection from the dead should proclaim light both to the People and to the Gentiles.

1. **Agrippa said.** Festus appears to have accorded a courtesy precedence to his guest.

**stretched forth his hand.** With the chain upon it (ver. 29) which linked him to the soldier who guarded him.

**made his defence.** This is the fullest of all his speeches in his own defence. But, in fact, he pleads rather for his Master than for himself. Not one word does he speak of censure of the enemies who had plotted his death, or of resentment for the two years of imprisonment without any evidence of his guilt. This complete absence of complaint or selfish anxiety, this consciousness simply of the greatness of the opportunity of proclaiming the Gospel before so distinguished an audience, give a singular dignity to this speech.<sup>a</sup>

The scene can scarcely fail to have recalled to him the prediction (ix. 15) that he should bear the Lord's name 'before the Gentiles and kings'. On this occasion he was speaking before a subject king: the day was to come when the words would be fulfilled yet more completely—when he would bear the Lord's name before the Caesar himself.<sup>b</sup>

2. **I think myself happy.** With the same graceful courtesy which he had shown before Felix he begins by acknowledging the competence of his principal hearer.<sup>c</sup>

3. **specially expert.** This testimony is confirmed by Josephus,<sup>d</sup> who consulted him with regard to his 'Jewish War'. Agrippa had been given the custody of the sacred vestments, the superintendence of the Temple and its treasury, and the appointment of the High Priest.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Farrar, ii. 355; Gurney, p. 310; Fraser, p. 225.

<sup>b</sup> M. Jones, p. 226.

<sup>c</sup> Vaughan, iii. 284.

<sup>d</sup> *Antiq.* xx. i. 3.

<sup>e</sup> Gilbert, p. 199; Buss, p. 137.

8. **with you** (plural). He turns to his audience, apparently noticing some movement of dissent. Most of those present were Gentiles, to whom the idea of a resurrection was, as he had discovered at Athens, an absurdity.<sup>a</sup>

10. **the saints**. So he calls the disciples before Agrippa, identifying himself with them. Before the people, who would have resented the term, he had said 'men and women' (xxii. 4), and identified himself with the Jews, calling them 'brethren'.<sup>b</sup>

**I gave my vote**. This would naturally imply that Saul had been a member of the Sanhedrin; but it may mean no more than the 'approval' of viii. 1.

14. **in the Hebrew language**. In his former speech (xxii. 7), which was spoken in Aramaic, there was no need to state this fact, though the Hebrew form of the name, Saoul, is given.<sup>c</sup>

**to kick against goads**. This is a common proverb in both Greek and Latin,<sup>d</sup> and Gardner thinks<sup>e</sup> that it may be an amplification due to Luke. But, though it is not elsewhere found, it may well have been a proverb in Aramaic also. As Jesus in the days of His flesh was accustomed to 'open his mouth in parables' (Matt. xiii. 35), so now He clothed His thought in a graphic metaphor. The figure is from an ox which, when pricked with the goad, kicks and so gets a sharper stab. Paul records the words here, because they expressed the idea which he was anxious throughout to suggest—that he took the step which was so distasteful to the Jews under the constraint of an irresistible power.<sup>f</sup>

17. **choosing thee**. Not 'delivering thee' (A. V. and R. V.). He was a 'chosen vessel' (ix. 16).

**to whom I send thee**. Elsewhere (xxii. 21) Paul represents this command as being given to him later. His early preaching, both at Damascus and at Jerusalem, shows little trace of knowledge of this mission; he appears to have addressed himself to Jews only. Probably he only gradually realized his special vocation, and afterwards unconsciously antedated it.<sup>g</sup>

18. **from darkness to light**. This conception of the world as divided into two spheres of light and darkness, ruled respectively by

<sup>a</sup> Page, *Acts*; M. Jones, p. 232.

<sup>b</sup> Stiffler, p. 252; Howson, *Character*, p. 46.

<sup>d</sup> Æschylus, *Agam.* 1624; Terence, *Phorm.* i. 2, 28.

<sup>f</sup> Stalker, p. 57; Page, *Acts*; Baur, i. 64.

<sup>g</sup> A. E. Garvie, *Expositor*, March, 1908, p. 205.

<sup>c</sup> Baur, i. 64.

<sup>e</sup> p. 411.

God and Satan, is found repeatedly in Paul's Epistles. Cf. Eph. v. 8; Col. i. 12, 13; 2 Cor. iv. 6; 1 Thess. v. 5.<sup>a</sup>

20. **through all the country of Judaea.** There is no record elsewhere of this work. The Greek is unusual, and the passage may be corrupt. If not, the words must be due to a mistake on Luke's part. Paul cannot have preached in Judaea before the time mentioned in Gal. i. 22. The few places through which he passed between Caesarea and Jerusalem, or between Antioch and Jerusalem, could scarcely be thus described; but Luke may be assigning such opportunities as those journeys afforded to an earlier period.<sup>b</sup>

22. **the help that cometh from God.** None of the plots of the Jews against him had succeeded; but in particular he ascribes his escape in the Temple to a special interposition of Providence.

**testifying.** This and the following verse summarize his teaching in its threefold aspect; its witness-bearing—'testifying', its universal destination—'to both small and great', its harmony with the earlier revelation—'saying nothing beyond', &c.: and in its threefold contents; the story of a suffering Messiah, who rose from the dead, who was the Light of the world.<sup>c</sup>

How far Luke is here giving Paul's words or his own it is not possible to say. There is, at any rate, a strange correspondence<sup>d</sup> between them and the concluding words of his Gospel (xxiv. 44 seq.), 'All things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms concerning me . . . And he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things.'

#### 24-29

<sup>24</sup> And as he thus made his defence, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art mad: thy many books are making thee crazy. <sup>25</sup> But Paul said, I am not mad, your Excellency; but am uttering words of sober truth. <sup>26</sup> For the king knoweth of these things; to whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that no detail of these things is hidden from him; for this hath not been

<sup>a</sup> M. Jones, p. 233.

<sup>b</sup> Zeller, i. 301; Harnack, *Acts*, p. 75.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, ii. 324.

<sup>d</sup> Norris, p. 118.

done in a corner. <sup>27</sup> King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. <sup>28</sup> And Agrippa said to Paul, With little labour thou wouldst fain persuade me, to make me a Christian! <sup>29</sup> And Paul said, I would to God that, whether with little or with much, not only thou, but also all that hear me, might this day become such as I am, saving these chains.

**24. with a loud voice.** This touch suggests that Luke was present, or derived his account from one who was. The interruption was rude, but the loud voice was not due to rudeness but to astonishment. A vision from heaven!—that was startling enough: but a resurrection from the dead!—the man must be mad. Festus could no more understand this than could the philosophers at Athens (xvii. 32). And, indeed, from Festus' point of view Paul was mad. Christianity is madness, if materialism be true and this world be all. Why wander in sheep-skins and goat-skins, and be destitute, afflicted, tormented (Heb. xi. 37), if there be no resurrection from the dead? In a sceptical and materialistic age, when men lived for the pleasures of the hour and had no thought of a God of judgment, one who acted in opposition to all maxims of worldly prudence, and in his zeal for souls scorned toil and suffering, might well seem to be a madman.<sup>a</sup>

**thy many books.** Paul may have asked, as he did in his later imprisonment (2 Tim. iv. 13) for 'books and parchments'.<sup>b</sup> But the allusion may be only to his reference to the prophets as his authority for such strange speculations.

**25. I am not mad.** The rude interruption of the judge does not ruffle the exquisite courtesy of the prisoner. Yet it was no cold, passionless man who made this brief, dignified reply, but one whose soul contained hidden fires. Calmly he turns from Festus, who understood nothing, to Agrippa, who at least understood a little.<sup>c</sup>

**26. this hath not been done in a corner.** The reference is not to his own conversion, but to the Resurrection of Jesus. The king could not deny that He had been crucified and was said by many to have risen from the dead. So much was notorious.

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 160; Parker, iii. 173; Eadie, p. 418.

<sup>b</sup> Norris, p. 118.

<sup>c</sup> Gurney, p. 310; Maclaren, ii. 325.



**27. believest thou the prophets?** He makes a personal appeal, startling in its abruptness, and one that was awkward for Agrippa. As a Jewish king, anxious to stand well with his own nation, he dared not disown the prophets. But as a Roman nobleman, in the presence of a Roman who had just expressed his scorn, he did not care to acknowledge his belief in the superstition of the despised Jew. So he adroitly parried the question with tact and good humour.<sup>a</sup>

**28. With little labour.** Sermons on the 'almost Christian' are irrelevant, being based on a misunderstanding of the Greek. Agrippa's answer is a bit of ironical pleasantry. Alluding evidently to Paul's account of his own sudden conversion, he says, 'That is all very well for a common Jew like you, but a king does not change his whole course of life in a moment.' The irony is shown by the use of the word 'Christian', which was not at this time used by the brethren themselves, but was a term of contempt used by outsiders (see on xi. 26). It is, however, possible that Agrippa used the word 'Nazarene', which was the name given to the Christians by the Jews (xxiv. 3), and that Luke introduced the word 'Christian' from his own vocabulary.

**29. And Paul said.** This beautiful answer is Paul's last recorded word in Judaea. He meets the sarcasm with deep earnestness; ignores the gibe in the word 'Christian', substituting 'such as I am'—'like me in my faith and joy and hope'; and, with perfect recollection of the right thing to say, adds, as he lifts with a smile his manacled hands, 'only not like me in this chain.'

### 30-32

<sup>30</sup> And the king rose up and the governor and Bernice and they that sat with them; <sup>31</sup> and when they had withdrawn, they talked together, saying, This man doeth nothing deserving of death or of imprisonment. <sup>32</sup> And Agrippa said to Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed to Caesar.

**31. nothing deserving of death.** Luke evidently wishes to show how from all quarters came the conviction of Paul's innocence. The Jews 'find no evil in this man' (xxiii. 9); Lysias writes that nothing was 'laid to his charge deserving of death or imprisonment'; Festus pronounces that he had 'committed nothing worthy of death'

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 161.

(xxv. 25); and now Agrippa declares that he ought to have been 'set at liberty'.<sup>a</sup> Similarly Luke, alone of the Evangelists, records that Pilate found no guilt in Jesus, and thrice desired to release Him (Luke xxiii. 4, 16, 20, 22).

32. **Agrippa said.** The hearing did not furnish Festus with any clear charge to send to Rome. But Agrippa was a favourite at the Imperial Court, and his judgment would lead Festus to write favourably. If Paul was acquitted by Nero, it was probably largely in consequence of the official report now sent.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### I-6

<sup>1</sup> And when it was determined that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to a certain centurion named Julius, of the Augustan cohort. <sup>2</sup> And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the places on the coast of Asia, we put to sea, Aristarchus, a Macedonian, of Thessalonica, being with us. <sup>3</sup> And the next day we touched at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and avail himself of their care. <sup>4</sup> And putting to sea thence, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. <sup>5</sup> And when we had sailed across the sea off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. <sup>6</sup> And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy; and he put us thereon.

1. **we.** The greater detail which at once begins with the reappearance of this pronoun makes it improbable that Luke had been with Paul during his imprisonment. Ramsay thinks<sup>b</sup> that both he and Aristarchus accompanied Paul as his slaves, and that this is the explanation of his importance in the eyes of the centurion. This may be true of Aristarchus, but it is more likely that Luke obtained a free passage as a physician, desiring to watch over Paul's health. That the latter was an invalid is shown by the fact that, the very day

<sup>a</sup> Ramsden, ii. 250.

<sup>b</sup> *Paul*, p. 316.

after the voyage began, he was allowed to land at Sidon and have the benefit of special care from his friends.<sup>a</sup>

The narrative of the voyage is valuable for two reasons. (1) It is so plainly historical that it does much to confirm the historical character of the whole book in which it finds a place. Thorough investigation has served only to prove the accuracy of the nautical details. Indeed, no other passage in literature teaches us so much about the ships of the ancient world and the method of handling them.<sup>b</sup> (2) At first sight it seems strange that so disproportionate a space should be given to the story of a storm and a shipwreck. But we cease to wonder when we see how it shows the character of Paul in a novel situation, displaying the even consistency of his Christian life. The Apostle, whose spiritual pre-eminence is seen elsewhere, appears here as the practical man, who by his experience, self-possession, insight, and courage compels, as a prisoner, the respect of those about him, and finally assumes the leadership.<sup>c</sup> These facts, however, do not altogether explain why Luke described with so much detail a particular voyage. It is clear that he felt that with the departure from Caesarea a new era in the development of Christianity began. Paul is setting sail to carry the Gospel to the world's centre. At last all obstacles have been removed, all barriers have fallen: Paul's face is turned to Rome.<sup>d</sup>

This was the fourth shipwreck in Paul's experience. More than two years before this date he had written (2 Cor. xi. 25) that he had 'thrice suffered shipwreck'.

**certain other prisoners.** Probably they were not, like Paul, appellants to the Emperor, but condemned malefactors, who were being sent to Rome to amuse the populace by their death in the arena.<sup>e</sup>

**the Augustan cohort.** Ramsay follows Mommsen in thinking that this is a popular description of the corps of Imperial couriers, called Peregrini ('foreigners') from the fact that they were constantly employed in the Provinces. They were also known as Frumentarii, because they were members of the Imperial commissariat. Since Julius assumed the chief authority (ver. 11) in the Alexandrian cornship, he was almost certainly a Frumentarian.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Fraser, p. 406; Buss, p. 406; Harnack, *Luke*, p. 148.

<sup>b</sup> Stanley, p. 11; Benson, p. 622; Howson, *Character*, p. 10.

<sup>c</sup> Howson, *Scenes*, p. 136; Weizsäcker, ii. 127.

<sup>d</sup> Stifler, p. 259; Baumgarten, ii. 208, 218.

<sup>e</sup> Johnston, p. 163; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 314.

<sup>f</sup> Buss, p. 345; Rendall, *Acts*.

2. **a ship of Adramyttium.** This was evidently a small coasting vessel, touching at various ports on its way to winter at Adramyttium, near Troas. Julius either hoped to find, as happened, a larger ship bound for Italy, or meant to cross from Troas to Philippi, take the land route to Dyrrhachium, and thence go by sea to Brundisium.<sup>a</sup>

3. **gave him leave.** This kindly act, shown so early in the voyage, must mean that Julius had made acquaintance with Paul before starting. He may have been present at the hearing before Agrippa. Paul would, of course, be accompanied by his military guard.

**their care.** The Greek word implies medical attention (Luke x. 34, 35).<sup>b</sup> Paul was probably suffering from his long confinement.

5. **Myra.** There is no mention of Christians here, or at Lasea, Melita, Syracuse, or Rhegium.<sup>c</sup>

6. **a ship of Alexandria.** A corn-ship (ver. 38), and therefore with a dangerously shifting cargo. The size of these ships is shown by the fact that not only could this one carry 276 persons (ver. 37), but that, in the following spring, another corn-ship conveyed them, or a portion of them, to Italy in addition to her own crew.<sup>d</sup>

### 7-13

<sup>7</sup> And when we had sailed slowly many days and were come with difficulty over against Cnidus, the wind no longer favouring us, we sailed under the lee of Crete over against Salmone; <sup>8</sup> and with difficulty coasting along it we came to a certain place called Fair Havens, nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea. <sup>9</sup> And when much time was spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was now already past, Paul admonished them <sup>10</sup> and said to them, Sirs, I perceive that further sailing will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives. <sup>11</sup> But the centurion gave more heed to the sailingmaster and the captain of the ship than to those things which were spoken by Paul. <sup>12</sup> And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to

<sup>a</sup> Farrar, ii. 364; Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 316.

<sup>b</sup> Harnack, *Luke*, p. 181.

<sup>c</sup> Harnack, *Luke*, p. 31.

<sup>d</sup> Smith, p. 70.

put to sea thence, if by any means they could reach Phoenix and winter there : which is a haven of Crete, looking south-west and north-west. <sup>13</sup>And when a gentle south wind sprang up, thinking that their purpose was served, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close in shore.

**8. Fair Havens.** It bears the same name still. A tongue of land, stretching into the bay, divides it into a double harbour.

**9. much time.** They were three months at Melita, and probably left that island in March, when navigation would begin again ; so they must have waited here till late in the autumn.

**the Fast.** The Day of Atonement, Sept. 24, when navigation usually ceased for the winter. Luke's use of the Jewish mode of reckoning looks as though he had been a proselyte (see on xx. 6).

**admonished them.** His advice was not taken ; but that a prisoner should have tendered advice at all shows the position which Paul's character and experience had already won for him in the ship's community.<sup>a</sup>

**10. I perceive.** This was not a prophecy. The man who had ' thrice suffered shipwreck ' (2 Cor. xi. 25) spoke as an experienced sailor. As a matter of fact, no lives were lost.

**11. the centurion.** The Alexandrian corn-ships were Government vessels, and the ' Frumentarian ' centurion ranked above the captain. There was no separation at Rome between the military and naval services.<sup>b</sup>

**gave more heed.** The captain had the best of reasons for considering the safety of his ship, and the majority was on his side. And though the event justified Paul's advice, a bay which was open to nearly half the compass would not have been a good winter harbour,<sup>c</sup> and there was no town near.

**12. if by any means.** Evidently they were not very sanguine of success. From Fair Havens to Cape Matala is five miles, and thence to Phoenix thirty-four.

**looking south-west and north-west.** If, as is almost certain, Lutro occupies the site of the ancient Phoenix, this description is not accurate. It must, however, be remembered that Luke did not see the harbour, but is describing it from hearsay.

<sup>a</sup> Stifler, p. 267.

<sup>b</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 325.

<sup>c</sup> Howson, *Companions*, p. 181 ; Smith, p. 84.



13. **thinking that their purpose was served.** They were now so confident that they did not even take the precaution of getting their longboat on board (ver. 16).

## 14-26

14 But not long after there beat down from it a tempestuous wind called Euraquilo ; 15 and when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way and let her drive. 16 And running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were able with difficulty to secure the boat ; 17 and when they had hoisted it up, they used braces, frapping the ship : and fearing lest they should be driven on to the Syrtis, they lowered the gear and so drove. 18 And as we laboured exceedingly with the storm, the next day they began to throw the freight overboard ; 19 and the third day they cast out with their own hands the furniture of the ship. 20 And when neither sun nor stars shone upon us for many days and no small tempest lay on us, henceforth all hope that we should be saved was being stripped from us. 21 And when they had been long without food, Paul stood forth in the midst of them and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened to me and not put to sea from Crete, and so have been spared this injury and loss. 22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer : for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For there stood by me this night an angel of the God whose I am, whom also I serve, 24 saying, Fear not, Paul ; thou must stand before Caesar ; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. 25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer ; for I believe God, that it shall be even so as it hath been spoken to me. [26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.]

14. **beat down from it.** The Cretan mountains are over 7,000 feet in height.<sup>a</sup>

**Euraquilo.** Luke probably heard the sailors describe the wind by the local name. Levantine sailors still call this particular wind 'Gregalia', which is the same word. (Cf. the corruption of 'Euripus' into its modern form of 'Egripou'.)<sup>b</sup>

15. **let her drive.** The suddenness of the hurricane gave no time to furl the great mainsail.<sup>c</sup>

16. **with difficulty.** The boat was doubtless waterlogged.

17. **frapping.** That is, passing cables round the hull to keep the timbers from parting. It is evident that the ship had already sprung a leak. The strain, instead of being distributed as in a modern sailing ship, was concentrated by the single mast with its huge sail upon a single point. The Greek word is nowhere else used of undergirding a ship, though it is used of ships in another sense by Polybius,<sup>d</sup> but it is the regular medical term for understrapping. Similarly the Greek word translated 'braces' was a current medical term.<sup>e</sup>

**the Syrtis.** 'Quicksands' (A.V.) is a mistranslation, because a definite place on the north coast of Africa is referred to.

**lowered the gear.** That is, probably, the yardarm; leaving only enough sail to enable them to tack as near the wind as possible. 'Strake sail' (A.V.) cannot be right, since such a course would have deprived them of the only possible means of avoiding the danger which they feared.<sup>f</sup>

18. **throw the freight overboard.** This is a doubtful rendering of the Greek. The literal translation is 'proceeded to make an out-cast', and what may be meant is a 'floating anchor'—that is, a huge bundle of everything that could be spared, fastened up in a sail and thrown out with two cables attached. The effect would be to retard the speed with which the ship drifted; and, if thrown out at one side, and not at the stern, to act as a rudder.<sup>g</sup>

19. **they cast out.** These successive attempts to lighten the vessel show that she was leaking badly and was in imminent danger of foundering.

21. **without food.** The Greek word is a medical term implying, not fasting, but loss of appetite; and the narrative suggests that it

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 327.

<sup>b</sup> T. K. Cheyne, *Encycl. Bibl.*, p. 1429.

<sup>c</sup> Ball, p. 68.

<sup>d</sup> xxvii. 3. 3.

<sup>e</sup> Harnack, *Luke*, p. 181.

<sup>f</sup> Smith, p. 106.

<sup>g</sup> Benson, p. 626.

was general, but not universal. Thus the cause was probably sea-sickness. Paul appears not to have suffered from it (verses 21 and 33), nor the sailors (verses 27 and 30); and they had flour and were able to bake it (ver. 35). And the fact that all were able to eat heartily when the gale had abated (ver. 38) implies that some had previously been prostrated by sea-sickness rather than by starvation.<sup>a</sup>

**ye should have hearkened unto me.** Not the 'I told you so' of a small nature, but a reference to the wisdom of his former counsel in order to induce acceptance of his present advice.<sup>b</sup>

**23. there stood by me.** We are shown the secret of his courage and self-possession—faith and prayer. Like Peter before his execution (xii. 6), he had calmly slept; and to him, as to Peter, an angel had ministered.<sup>c</sup>

**24. God hath given thee.** From the answer we gather what the prayer had been—that he might be spared to preach Christ in the capital and that the lives of all on board might be preserved.<sup>d</sup> It is an encouraging proof that prayer is a real factor in determining God's dealings with men. Paul, at any rate, so believed. Thus he wrote to Philemon (ver. 22), 'Prepare me a lodging, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given to you.'

**25. I believe God.** But Paul did not sit down and wait for God to bring about what He had ordained. From the hour that he received this assurance he laboured to realize it. The Divine promise of safety was to be fulfilled, not by fatalistic apathy, but by man's co-operation. The same God who ordained the end ordained the means. God's purpose and man's endeavour bear upon each other. The Divine purpose gives energy to human effort, and human effort is effectual through the Divine purpose.<sup>e</sup>

**26. Howbeit.** This verse is almost certainly an interpolation, introduced by some copyist from the subsequent narrative. It is not said to be part of the angel's message, and Paul was not likely to have foreseen such an immaterial detail.

## 27-38

<sup>27</sup> But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were being driven over the sea of Adria, about mid-

<sup>a</sup> J. R. Madan, *Journal of Theological Studies*, Oct. 1904.

<sup>b</sup> Maclaren, ii. 352.

<sup>c</sup> Howson, *Scenes*, p. 128; F. B. Meyer, p. 153.

<sup>d</sup> Arnot, p. 514.

<sup>e</sup> Stifler, p. 269; Plumptre, *Acts*; Blunt, ii. 220; Mackenzie, p. 284.

night the sailors deemed that they were drawing nigh to land ; <sup>28</sup> and they sounded and found twenty fathoms ; and after a little space they sounded again and found fifteen fathoms. <sup>29</sup> And fearing lest we should be cast ashore on rocky ground, they let go four anchors from the stern and prayed for the dawn. <sup>30</sup> And as the sailors were seeking to flee from the ship, and had lowered the boat into the sea under colour as though they would lay out anchors from the foreship, <sup>31</sup> Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. <sup>32</sup> Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat and let her fall off. <sup>33</sup> And until the day was at point to break Paul kept beseeching them all to take some food, saying, The day ye are awaiting is the fourteenth that ye continue fasting, having eaten nothing. <sup>34</sup> Wherefore I beseech you to take some food ; for this is important for your safety ; for there shall not a hair perish from the head of any of you. <sup>35</sup> And when he had said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in presence of them all ; and he brake it and began to eat. <sup>36</sup> Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took food. <sup>37</sup> And we were in all in the ship two hundred and threescore and sixteen souls. <sup>38</sup> And when they had eaten enough, they set about lightening the ship by throwing out the grain into the sea.

**27. the sailors deemed.** The wind was not off shore, so that no land-scents could have reached them. They must have heard the sound of breakers. A ship approaching St. Paul's Bay from the east would have to pass close to the rocky point of Koura.<sup>a</sup>

**28. twenty fathoms.** Modern charts show that after Koura a ship passes over first twenty, and then fifteen fathoms.

**29. four anchors.** The number shows that the captain left nothing to chance. They were forced to anchor, in order to have

<sup>a</sup> Smith, p. 117.

daylight before venturing on the last resource of beaching the sinking vessel.

**from the stern.** There was a twofold reason for this unusual course. If anchored by the bow, the ship might swing round upon the rocks, the distance of which could not be seen in the darkness; and would also, when they wished to beach her, have had her stern pointing towards the shore.<sup>a</sup>

**prayed for the dawn.** They feared that their anchors might drag, not knowing—what modern investigation has revealed—that they had been dropped into clay of extraordinary tenacity.<sup>b</sup>

**30. as the sailors were seeking to flee.** What a change Christianity has wrought in the sailor! These men, accustomed to the sea, best able of all on board to take care of themselves in the event of disaster, charged moreover with the care of the lives with them, think only of themselves.<sup>c</sup> At the same time it must be remembered that the boat would not hold all the crew, so that only a selfish few were guilty of this cowardly attempt at desertion.

**had lowered the boat.** Fearing that the anchors might drag, or the cables part, or the ship founder before morning, and knowing that the land was close, they thought it would be safer to try to gain it in a small boat than in the ship.

**from the foreship.** Anchors from the bow would under the circumstances obviously be useless; and the centurion saw, when Paul called his attention, that it was a pretext for deserting.<sup>d</sup>

**31. Paul said.** The sailors may have spoken unguardedly before him, not suspecting that a landsman would understand their real design.

**Except these abide.** If the sailors had left the ship, the soldiers could not have executed the necessary measures for beaching her safely.<sup>e</sup>

**33. to take some food.** It is an interesting illustration of Paul's sanity that he did not excite minds, already strained, by any spiritual demands, but begged them to eat a good breakfast if they wished to be saved. Truly the man who had been 'caught up to the third heaven' (2 Cor. xii. 2) did not remain there!<sup>f</sup>

**fasting.** The Greek word (see on ver. 21) does not necessarily

<sup>a</sup> Smith, p. 133; Conybeare and Howson, ii. 357.

<sup>b</sup> Farrar, ii. 378.

<sup>c</sup> Benson, p. 630; Burrell, p. 296.

<sup>d</sup> Rendall, *Acts*.

<sup>e</sup> Arnot, p. 519.

<sup>f</sup> Vaughan, iii. 350; Stifler, p. 269.



imply entire abstinence from food ; and ' nothing ' is not to be taken literally, but means ' no sufficient food '.<sup>a</sup>

35. **gave thanks.** This was a common custom and would not surprise the heathen who witnessed it. And the ' breaking of bread ' was the usual act of the head of a Hebrew household. Though the expression is often used to describe the Eucharist, it is also used (Luke xxiv. 30) of an ordinary meal. Still, Luke probably means to imply that what was to those present a common meal was to Paul a Eucharist.<sup>b</sup>

36. **Then were they all of good cheer.** The courage and example of Paul were contagious, and the sea-sickness was probably over. There are several indications that the gale had abated—the design of landing in the boat (ver. 30) ; the Greek word translated ' breeze ' (ver. 40), which would not be used of a high wind ; and the heavy rain (xxviii. 2) which is not commonly found with a violent gale.<sup>c</sup>

37. **two hundred and threescore and sixteen souls.** There was, probably at this juncture a muster of all on board, in order to check their safety after landing. The number is startling, but we know little about the size of ancient ships, and Josephus says<sup>d</sup> that the ship in which he was wrecked had six hundred on board.

38. **lightening.** The more they could reduce her draught, the better their chance of getting the ship over the shallows to the shore.

### 39-44

<sup>39</sup> And when it was day, they did not recognize the land ; but they descried a certain bay with a beach, upon which they planned, if it were possible, to run the ship. <sup>40</sup> And casting off the anchors they left them in the sea, at the same time unlash the paddle-rudders ; and hoisting the foresail to the breeze they made for the beach. <sup>41</sup> But lighting on a place where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground ; and the foreship struck and remained immovable, but the stern began to break up under the shock. <sup>42</sup> And the counsel of

<sup>a</sup> Plumptre, *Acts* ; Benson, p. 628.

<sup>b</sup> Bungener, p. 368 ; Hackett, *Acts* ; Benson, p. 628.

<sup>c</sup> J. R. Madan, *Journal of Theological Studies*, Oct. 1904.

<sup>d</sup> *Life*, c. 3.

the soldiers was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape. <sup>41</sup> But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, stayed them from their desire, and commanded that they who could swim should cast themselves overboard and get first to land, <sup>42</sup> and the rest, some on planks, and some on other things from the ship. And so it came to pass that all escaped safe to land.

39. **did not recognize the land.** The sailors probably knew little of the island except the usual port of Valetta, from which the scene of the shipwreck was some distance.<sup>a</sup>

41. **where two seas met.** The island of Salmonetta forms with the coast an apparent bay. The current flowing through the narrow channel has raised a bank of tenacious clay.<sup>b</sup>

42. **the counsel of the soldiers.** Roman discipline was inexorable. They could not save themselves by swimming without unchaining the prisoners to whom they were linked and for whose custody they were answerable with their lives. And probably they did not know that the land was an island from which the prisoners could not escape. It is also likely that all except Paul were criminals under sentence of death.

43. **stayed them.** By taking this course Julius risked his own life in the event of any prisoner escaping, since his order absolved his men of their responsibility.

**get first to land.** In order to lend a helping hand to the others.

Josephus tells us in his *Life* (c. 3) that he was wrecked on his voyage to Rome with some Jewish prisoners. He says that he was twenty-six years old at the time, which would put the date three years later than Paul's voyage. But his own narrative proves this to be a mistake, since he says that the prisoners were sent by Felix, the Procurator of Judaea. He calls them 'priests', and says that they were self-denying persons.<sup>c</sup> The natural inference would be that he was a passenger by this ship; and his statement that they numbered six hundred on board is not decisive to the contrary, since he is not always accurate. It is true that he also says that, when the vessel foundered, he was rescued by a ship of Cyrene, whereas Paul

<sup>a</sup> Smith, p. 143.

<sup>b</sup> Smith, p. 144.

<sup>c</sup> S. Sharpe, *Journey and Epistles of the Apostle Paul*, p. 58.

was cast ashore at Malta,<sup>a</sup> but the 'ship of Cyrene' may be the corn-ship which took Paul on to Italy in the spring, since the cult of Castor and Pollux (xxviii. 11) was common in, and round, Cyrene.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

## I-6

<sup>1</sup> And when we were escaped, then we learnt that the island was called Melita. <sup>2</sup> And the natives showed us no common kindness; for they kindled a fire and received us all, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. <sup>3</sup> And when Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and laid it on the fire, a viper came out by reason of the heat and fastened on his hand. <sup>4</sup> And when the foreign folk saw the beast hanging from his hand, they said one to another, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he escaped the sea, Justice suffered not to live. <sup>5</sup> But he shook off the beast into the fire and took no harm. <sup>6</sup> Howbeit they looked that he should swell, or fall down dead suddenly; when, however, they had been looking a great while and beheld nothing amiss happen to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

1. **Melita.** The modern Malta.

2. **the natives.** The translations 'barbarous people' (A.V.) and 'barbarians' (R.V.) are both misleading. The Greek word means only 'foreign folk'—that is, non-Greek people—and is interesting as plainly showing Luke's Greek origin.<sup>b</sup> The Maltese were of Phœnician descent and are described by Diodorus Siculus<sup>c</sup> as highly civilized; which is only what would be expected, since the island was in constant communication with two seats of ancient civilization, Carthage and Rome.<sup>d</sup>

3. **when Paul had gathered.** The man who had been fore-

<sup>a</sup> J. Thomas, p. 155.

<sup>b</sup> Harnack, *Luke*, p. 13.

<sup>c</sup> v. 12.

<sup>d</sup> Buss, p. 296.

most during the trying experiences of the preceding fortnight is still foremost when the danger is past; has his wits about him, and at once busies himself in work for the general good.

**brushwood.** Probably furze. But though there is now little timber in Malta, which has long been thickly populated in proportion to its size, there may have been forests at this period.

**a viper.** It has been objected that snakes are unknown in Malta. But, apart from the fact that the increase of population and the clearance of forests might easily lead to their disappearance in a small island, the statement is inaccurate. According to Ramsay,<sup>a</sup> a specimen has recently been found of the *Coronella Austriaca*, a small constrictor, which clings and bites, but has no poison fangs, and which resembles a viper in appearance.

**fastened.** It is not said in so many words that Paul was bitten, but the whole narrative implies it, and the Greek word is a technical medical term for poison taking effect.<sup>b</sup>

**on his hand.** Naturally after this work he was holding his numbed wet hands to the fire for comfort.<sup>c</sup>

4. **the beast.** The Greek word, 'therion,' is the medical term for a poisonous snake, the antidote made from its flesh being called 'theriake'.<sup>d</sup>

**a murderer.** Evidently he had been again chained to a soldier, or had the manacles hanging from his wrist, so that they knew that he was a prisoner; and to have escaped death by drowning only to die by the bite of a serpent was evidence of some great crime.

**Justice suffered not to live.** In their estimation he was already a doomed man.

These people held the belief, which lies at the basis of all natural religion, in the connexion between guilt and retribution. They recognized the moral element in the government of the world. But with this truth was mixed the erroneous idea that special calamity indicates special criminality—that the men on whom walls of Siloam fall are necessarily sinners. But the facts of life do not bear out such an inference. The man whom the serpent bites may be a murderer, but is more likely to be an innocent turf-cutter. There is such a thing as retributive justice, but the time of retribution, whether for good or evil, is not yet.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Expositor*, Feb. 1907, p. 122.

<sup>b</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 466; Harnack, *Luke*, p. 177.

<sup>c</sup> Stifler, p. 271.

<sup>d</sup> Harnack, *Luke*, p. 178.

<sup>e</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 467; F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, i. 197; Vaughan, iii. 362.

6. **swell, or fall down dead suddenly.** The two possible effects of snake-bite are described with medical accuracy; and the Greek words, rendered 'swell', 'fall down', and 'amiss', are all medical terms.<sup>a</sup>

## 7-10

<sup>7</sup> Now in those parts were lands belonging to the Primate of the island, whose name was Poplius; who received us and for three days entertained us in kindly fashion. <sup>8</sup> And it chanced that the father of Poplius lay sick of low fever and dysentery; to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laying his hands upon him healed him. <sup>9</sup> And when this was done, the rest also in the island who had infirmities came and received treatment; <sup>10</sup> who also distinguished us with many honours; and when we set sail, they put on board such things as we needed.

**7. Now in those parts.** One incident of the three months' stay in the island has been given—Paul's escape from danger. Now, one other is given—his work in healing others.

**the Primate.** The title is evidently official, since his father was living and would have been the chief man if the word was unofficial. A Greek inscription, found at Citta Vecchia in the centre of the island, confirms this, since it describes a man as 'Primate of the Maltese'. As Melita was in the province of the Praetor of Sicily, he probably governed by a delegate bearing this title.<sup>b</sup>

**Poplius.** Probably a Greek form of Popilius. The A.V. and R.V. render 'Publius', but the Primate would not be called by his prenomen.<sup>c</sup>

**entertained us.** Not, probably, all the crew, but Julius and some of his men, with a few others such as Paul and Luke. Their company was doubtless welcome on the dull little island in the winter season. The fact that Paul was included in the invitation is one more evidence that he was treated as a prisoner of rank and distinction.

**8. low fever and dysentery.** Both Greek words are technical terms found in Hippocrates.

<sup>a</sup> Harnack, *Luke*, p. 179.

<sup>b</sup> Buss, p. 296.

<sup>c</sup> Buss, p. 296.



**healed him.** Paul's power to heal by prayer and faith was occasional, when circumstances and subjects were suitable. When this cure was noised abroad, as would quickly happen owing to the rank of the sufferer, invalids poured in and 'received treatment'—that is, medical skill was employed to supplement the faith cure, and the physician Luke became prominent, though with his usual modesty he merely indicates the fact by the pronoun 'us' (ver. 10).<sup>a</sup>

**10. With many honours.** A technical term, like our 'honorarium', for the fee to a professional man.

**such things as we needed.** They had lost everything in the shipwreck.

No mention is made of evangelistic work in Melita. Very likely Paul was ill from the reaction when the strain was over.<sup>b</sup>

#### 11-15

<sup>11</sup> And after three months we put to sea in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the island, whose figurehead was The Twins. <sup>12</sup> And touching at Syracuse we stayed there three days. <sup>13</sup> And thence we beat up to Rhegium; and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli; <sup>14</sup> where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days; and so we came to Rome. <sup>15</sup> And meanwhile the brethren, having heard of us, had come thence to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Tres Tabernae; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

**11. three months.** This period of leisure would have given Luke abundant opportunity of learning from Paul the story of his life,<sup>c</sup> if he had at this time formed the design of writing the Acts. That his history betrays ignorance of so many facts indicates that the design was conceived later.

**The Twins.** Castor and Pollux were the tutelary deities of sailors.

**12. Syracuse.** They must have had a favouring wind, or they

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Expositor*, Dec. 1906; Harnack, *Luke*, p. 15.

<sup>b</sup> Maclaren, ii. 575.

<sup>c</sup> Chase, p. 19.

would scarcely have ventured to cross the open sea so early in the year. Now the south wind failed them, and they had to wait three days, and then had to tack in order to reach Rhegium, where they once more waited till the wind was again favourable.<sup>a</sup>

**13. Puteoli.** The regular port for the Alexandrian corn-ships.<sup>b</sup> From this point they travelled the remaining 130 miles by land.

**14. seven days.** As everything must have been lost in the shipwreck, the soldiers may have required some outfit before they could enter Rome; or Julius may have sent to the Capital for instructions and waited for an answer. Luke's statement that they stayed because the brethren requested it can scarcely be accurate, though it may have this foundation—that they wished Paul to stay over a Sunday, as at Troas (xx. 6) and Tyre (xxi. 4), and Julius prolonged the time as a favour to him.<sup>c</sup>

**and so.** The meaning is not clear. The words may imply that Paul's wish to visit Rome was not fulfilled precisely as he had hoped.<sup>d</sup> But they may mark the climax of the Book, to which the long narrative of Paul's trial in its successive stages and the full details of the voyage were meant to lead up.

**we came to Rome.** This is usually explained<sup>e</sup> as an awkward anticipation of the narrative, since the next verse reverts to events that occurred before their arrival at the Capital. But the word 'Rome' in this verse denotes<sup>f</sup> the 'state', the boundary of which in Southern Latium they now crossed, while the entry to the city is recorded in ver. 16.

**15. having heard of us.** The week's stay at Puteoli had enabled the Christians at Rome to hear of Paul's arrival. Some three years before they had received from him the greatest of his letters, and had been expecting his coming.

The origin of the Church in Rome is wrapped in obscurity. Probably it was formed gradually. The Christian faith had been established in great provincial centres, such as Antioch, Ephesus, Thessalonica, and Corinth; and between these and Rome there was constant intercourse. The very fact that Paul wrote a letter to a Church of which he was not the founder implies (Rom. xv. 20) that it did not owe its origin to any one of the Apostles.<sup>g</sup>

**Appii Forum.** Ninety miles from Puteoli and forty from Rome.

<sup>a</sup> Ramsay, *Hastings' Dict.*, art. Rhegium.

<sup>b</sup> Page, *Acts*.

<sup>c</sup> Johnston, p. 171.

<sup>d</sup> W. M. Taylor, *The Limitations of Life*, p. 264.

<sup>e</sup> Page, *Acts*.

<sup>f</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 347.

<sup>g</sup> M. Jones, p. 245.

It was a town with an evil reputation,<sup>a</sup> haunted by thieves and swindlers, who preyed on strangers making for the Capital. Probably a crowd of idlers gathered to watch the arrival of the party, and Paul must have felt acutely the humiliation of walking through the streets chained to a soldier. This was not the arrival at Rome to which he had for years been looking forward. It was to have been the final fortress to be captured in his Master's name; he had told the Romans of his longing to 'impart some spiritual gift' to them (Rom. i. 11; xv. 29); he had expressed the desire to 'have some fruit' there (Rom. i. 13), as in other parts of the Empire; and now he was entering its borders, an old man, broken in health, and a prisoner, uncertain as to the issue of his appeal. What wonder if his heart sank within him!<sup>b</sup>

**Tres Tabernae.** Thirty-three miles from Rome. Here he was met by a second band of Christians, who had started later than the others or had dropped behind on the way.

**took courage.** It has been already shown (see on xx. 1) that it is not safe to conclude from Rom. xvi that Paul had many personal friends at Rome. But this evidence of regard would be in one sense all the more welcome from Christians who were strangers. Never before had any Church, not of his own founding, given him such a reception. And these brethren had taken a long journey, doubtless at inconvenience and difficulty, to greet him. He had been dreading his entry into Rome as a prisoner, doubtful if the Christians would dare, even if they wished, to recognize him. And when he found that, so far from being ashamed of his chain, they were ready openly to avow their fellowship with him, a load was lifted from his heart.

## 16-22

<sup>16</sup> And when we entered Rome, Paul was suffered to live by himself with the soldier who guarded him. <sup>17</sup> And after three days he called together first them that were of the Jews; and when they were assembled he said to them, I, brethren, though I had done nothing against the people or the customs of our fathers, was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans; <sup>18</sup> who, when they had examined me, desired

<sup>a</sup> Horace, *Sat.* v. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Macduff, *Paul*, p. 370; Stalker, p. 220.

to set me at liberty, because there was no cause of death in me. <sup>19</sup> But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. <sup>20</sup> For this cause therefore I invited you to see and to speak with me; for on account of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. <sup>21</sup> And they said to him, We neither received letters from Judaea concerning thee, nor did any of the brethren come hither and report or speak any evil of thee. <sup>22</sup> But we desire to hear from thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against.

**16. when we entered Rome.** Their road lay along the 'Sacred Way', lined with monuments of the illustrious dead, by which many a Roman general had passed, in his 'triumph', to the Capitol. Paul walked along it a prisoner in chains, yet a greater conqueror than any before him.<sup>a</sup>

After these words the A. V. adds, 'the centurion delivered the prisoners to the Captain of the Guard'. The words are wanting in the best MSS., but they may preserve a true tradition. Ramsay thinks<sup>b</sup> that 'the Captain of the Guard' means the Captain of the Frumentarians, to which corps Julius belonged. But Paul's words to the Philippians (i. 13), 'My bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard,' are in favour of understanding the Prefect of the Praetorian Guard to be meant.

**to live by himself.** The favourable report given by Festus in the official papers, backed by the testimony of Julius to Paul's high character, doubtless procured him this indulgence. It is also clear that Paul had ample funds. Not only is there no mention of his working for his support at Rome—as a prisoner he would probably be maintained by the State—but he was able to hire a lodging commodious enough for a large gathering.<sup>c</sup>

**with the soldier.** There would be degrees of annoyance. Some soldiers would be humane, others brutal; but, at the best, it must have been a grievous trial to a man of Paul's culture and refinement

<sup>a</sup> Stalker, p. 221; Bungener, p. 373; Pressensé, p. 164.

<sup>b</sup> *Paul*, p. 348.

<sup>c</sup> Taylor, *Paul*, p. 485; Gilbert, p. 222.

to have, for two whole years, night and day, eating and sleeping, talking or praying, a soldier chained to him. And the service was so irksome to the soldier that, if he were a man of morose temper, he could cause torture to his prisoner. How Paul felt the annoyance is shown by the fact that every one of the Epistles of the Captivity contains an allusion to his 'chain'.<sup>a</sup> Yet, as he tells the Philippians (i. 12), this 'fell out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel'. These men would hear his talks with his friends, would listen while he dictated his letters, would witness the praying to which he so frequently refers in those Epistles. Nor could Paul sit for hours beside another man and not speak of the subject which lay nearest to his heart. And he himself had the warrior spirit. How the soldier at his side must have thrilled as he heard the eloquent words dictated to the Ephesians (vi. 10 seq.), which described 'the whole armour of God'! And the frequent change of guards would spread a knowledge of the Gospel through all the Praetorians. It may even be that the number of Christians in the Roman army, to which Tertullian refers a century later, was largely due to the contact of these men with 'Paul the prisoner'.<sup>b</sup>

**17. after three days.** This was all the pause which he allowed himself after his long and trying journey, and the three days must have been occupied with finding and settling in his lodging.<sup>c</sup>

**the Jews.** That is, his countrymen who were not Christians. He called them together, not for purposes of evangelizing, but to forestall the false reports which were sure to come from Palestine (ver. 20). He was, no doubt, at the same time anxious to remove any prepossessions which might hinder the reception of his message. That they came on the invitation of a prisoner proves that Paul was well known to them by name.<sup>d</sup>

**was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.** This statement is not quite consistent with the earlier narrative (xxi. 33; xxii. 24). But the discrepancy, which is not material, is easily explained by the fact that Luke is giving the barest summary of Paul's words.<sup>e</sup> And Paul may have avoided, with his usual tact, saying that he was delivered to the Romans by the Jews.

**19. was compelled to appeal.** It was a principle with the Jews

<sup>a</sup> Arnot, p. 534; Vaughan, iii. 364; Farrar, ii. 391.

<sup>b</sup> Stalker, p. 223 seq.; Taylor, *Paul*, p. 490.

<sup>d</sup> Gilbert, p. 218.

<sup>c</sup> Maclaren, ii. 377.

<sup>e</sup> M. Jones, p. 253.



not to invoke Gentile authority against their own people. Similarly Paul held (1 Cor. vi. 1) that Christians ought not to go to law before heathen tribunals. Hence he was anxious that these Jews should not think that in appealing he had any thought of bringing a charge against his countrymen. His action had been defensive only.<sup>a</sup>

20. **the hope.** That is, of the Messiah. The chain upon his wrist was the result of his attachment to that hope. He had but taught that Christians were true Jews—that Christianity was not a new thing, but Judaism perfected.

21. **We neither received letters.** They probably knew more than they admitted, but news of his appeal could scarcely have come before his arrival. They must have heard of his first trial at Caesarea, since a number of Jews had come from that town to Rome in connexion with the accusation against Felix.<sup>b</sup>

22. **concerning this sect.** The natural inference from their words would be that there were very few Jewish Christians at Rome; and no doubt the Church there was mainly Gentile and the Jewish Christians of a low social class. But they must have known more than their language implies. Their relations with the Roman Government were at this time critical, and the Edict of Claudius (xviii. 2) may have made them cautious in discussing the new sect.<sup>c</sup>

**it is spoken against.** Paul might say that he was bound 'for the hope of Israel', but the general impression was that the Nazarenes rejected the hope of Israel by turning away from Moses.<sup>d</sup>

## 23-28

<sup>23</sup> And when they had appointed him a day, they came to him at his lodging in larger numbers; to whom he expounded matters, bearing witness to the kingdom of God, and seeking to persuade them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening. <sup>24</sup> And some listened to the things which were spoken, and some were disbelieving. <sup>25</sup> And when they agreed not with one another they departed, after that Paul had spoken

<sup>a</sup> Johnston, p. 68; Eadie, p. 441.

<sup>b</sup> Josephus, *Antiq.* xx. 8, 9.

<sup>c</sup> Purves, p. 238; Burrell, p. 306; Gilbert, p. 219.

<sup>d</sup> Fraser, p. 242.

a parting word, Well spake the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, <sup>26</sup> saying,

Go thou to this people, and say,

With your hearing ye will hear and will not understand :

And with your eyes ye will behold and will not see :

<sup>27</sup> For the heart of this people is waxed gross,

And their ears are dull of hearing,

And their eyes they have closed ;

Lest at any time they should see with their eyes,

And hear with their ears,

And understand with their heart,

And should turn again,

And I should heal them.

<sup>28</sup> Be it known therefore to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles : they will also hear.

**23. in larger numbers.** On this occasion Paul sought, not, as before, to remove prejudices against himself, but to win a hearing for the Gospel. Apparently the Jews were largely of a different class from those of the previous gathering. There is no trace of the former non-committal language, but, instead, the attitude which had confronted Paul in all the cities in which he had preached to Jews.<sup>a</sup>

Luke gives the merest epitome of this address. It no doubt followed the lines of the speech at Pisidian Antioch, which he had already recorded as a type of Paul's presentation of Christianity to a Jewish audience.<sup>b</sup>

**25. your fathers.** The change from the 'our fathers' of ver. 17 is significant. Paul sees that his experience at other cities was to be repeated at Rome, and he definitely separates himself from the Jewish community.<sup>c</sup>

**26. Go thou.** The result here was only what Paul had seen elsewhere—some believed, and some disbelieved. Why, then, did he utter these words of judgment? The answer is that, though Israel had rejected the Gospel in every Roman province, the provinces were not representative. But Rome was representative, and against

<sup>a</sup> Buss, p. 419.

<sup>b</sup> M. Jones, p. 252.

<sup>c</sup> M. Jones, p. 252.

the Jews of Rome he pronounces Isaiah's words (vi. 9) of Divine judgment on the indolent or dishonest hearer, whose punishment is judicial inability to hear aright. No passage of the Old Testament is so often quoted in the New. Jesus quoted it when Galilee rejected Him (Matt. xii. 14), and again, some months later, when Jerusalem endorsed the rejection (John xii. 40).<sup>a</sup>

**28. they will also hear.** The main theme of the Acts is the expansion of the Gospel. But throughout we are shown the dark side of the victorious progress in the hostility of the Jews. In this Paul now recognizes the preordained judgment of God. The rejection of Israel and the acceptance of the Gentiles is impressively emphasized in this verse, which closes the first chapter of Christian history.<sup>b</sup>

[Verse 29 (A.V.)—'And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves'—is wanting in the best MSS.]

## 30-31

<sup>30</sup> And he abode two whole years in his own hired lodging, and received all that went to see him ;  
<sup>31</sup> preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all freedom and without let.

**30. two whole years.** The statement implies a knowledge on Luke's part that Paul's residence ceased at the end of that time, either by death or release.

The long delay in the hearing of the appeal is strange. There is no ground for throwing the blame on Nero, who with all his faults was not neglectful of public business. But documents may have been lost in the shipwreck ; the accusers may have been in no hurry to expedite a case which they knew to be weak, and would interpose every obstacle if they thought it was likely to be decided against them. And Paul would have little power of accelerating a decision in his favour.<sup>c</sup>

We know nothing of the events of these two years beyond what may be gathered from the four Epistles of the Imprisonment—Philip-

<sup>a</sup> Stifter, p. 282 seq. ; Vaughan, iii. 366.

<sup>b</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. xxiii ; Pfeiderer, *Paulinism*, ii. 251.

<sup>c</sup> Simcox, p. 114 ; C. Merivale, p. 54.

prians, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon. And they do not tell us much more than the names of the companions who were with Paul at one time or another—Tychicus, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Onesimus, Luke, Aristarchus, Mark, Justus, Epaphras, and Demas. But members of the Roman Church must have been constant visitors. Those who had travelled so many miles to greet him on his first arrival would not be likely to neglect him when he was settled among them.<sup>a</sup>

But though in these letters Paul does not tell us many facts, he has done more for the world by them than he could have achieved by many years of missionary activity. The greatest book of religious genius outside the Bible was written by John Bunyan in a jail. A yet greater treasure was given to the Church of Christ in the guise of misfortune, when the arrest of Paul's bodily activity supplied him with the leisure to write these four letters.<sup>b</sup>

**31. without let.** This was perhaps the only time in his ministry of which this could be said. The Jews dared not agitate against him, and the Romans did not care to interfere. It is a skilfully designed conclusion. Luke's last word is to say something favourable to the attitude of the Roman authorities to the Gospel.

Nothing so brings home to us the debt which we owe to Luke's history as the thickness of the curtain which falls at the close of it. We cannot even say for certain whether at the end of the two years Paul was released or executed. His condemnation is certainly not inherently improbable. No more serious charge in the eyes of the Roman Government could be brought against any man than that he was 'a mover of insurrection among all the Jews throughout the world' (xxiv. 5); and though Festus is not likely to have recorded that charge, Paul's enemies may have revived it, and they would have had no difficulty in accumulating evidence of the fact that serious disturbances had resulted from his presence in one city after another (see on xxiv. 5). They might also be able <sup>c</sup> to poison the Emperor's mind by means of his mistress Poppaea, who was a Jewess by religion. And it may plausibly be urged that, if he had been acquitted, it is hard to see why Luke should not have recorded a fact which would have been so grand a climax in the long series of instances which he gives of favourable treatment accorded to Christianity by the Roman authorities.<sup>d</sup>

On the other hand it may be urged that ver. 30 implies that after

<sup>a</sup> F. B. Meyer, p. 170.

<sup>b</sup> Stalker, p. 228.

<sup>c</sup> Ragg, p. 201.

<sup>d</sup> McGiffert, p. 418 seq.

two years the situation there described ended. If it ended with Paul's death, why was not his death recorded? To imagine that Luke was silent about the martyrdom of an Apostle lest he should efface the impression of the friendliness of the Roman authorities, is absurd.<sup>a</sup> The natural inference is that Paul was acquitted and left Rome; and this would become a practical certainty, if the Pastoral Epistles are genuine. But, though they may well be based upon genuine letters of Paul which have been enlarged by another hand, they are of doubtful authenticity in their present shape. It may, however, be pointed out that the argument which they supply in favour of a second imprisonment does not altogether depend upon their authenticity, since no early forger would have introduced details inconsistent with what was believed in his time about Paul's life.<sup>b</sup>

Another question which has been mooted is whether the Acts was meant by Luke to close his history. It has been thought by some that, whether he completed the design or not, he purposed to write a Trilogy. Too much stress must not be laid upon the fact that he speaks (i. 1) of his 'first', and not his 'former', Book, as though he contemplated a third volume.<sup>c</sup> Professor Moulton has shown<sup>d</sup> that the use of the Greek word for 'first', where only two things are concerned, is common in the Hellenistic Greek (cf. Matt. xxi. 31). But it has been pointed out that, just as he closed his Gospel with a brief notice of the Ascension while he reserved the fuller account for his second Book, so, in closing the Acts with a brief summary of Paul's ministry in prison, he may have been reserving for a third volume, which was either never written or has been lost, a fuller record of that ministry and of the trial which ended it.<sup>e</sup>

This supposition seems, however, to imply a mistaken view of Luke's aim, which was not to write a biography of Paul, but a history of the spread of the Gospel. So he leaves Paul, as before he left Peter and Barnabas, the moment that their work ceased to be connected with the development of the Church as he was tracing it. The cause was everything, the instrument nothing. He was not concerned with individual workers, but with the grand fulfilment of the Divine purpose. Rome, the proud capital of the world, has heard about Christ. The Gospel has reached 'unto the uttermost parts of the earth' (see on i. 8).<sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 39; *Luke*, p. 135.

<sup>b</sup> McGiffert, p. 404; Johnston, p. 185.

<sup>d</sup> *Prolegomena*, p. 79.

<sup>f</sup> Harnack, *Acts*, p. 39; Stiffler, p. 276; Burrell, p. 312.

<sup>c</sup> Ramsay, *Paul*, p. 23.

<sup>e</sup> Rendall, *Acts*, p. 14.



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